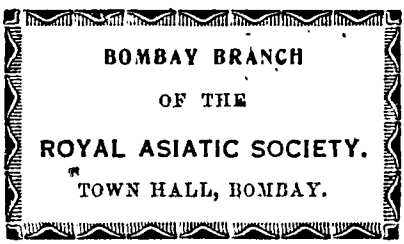

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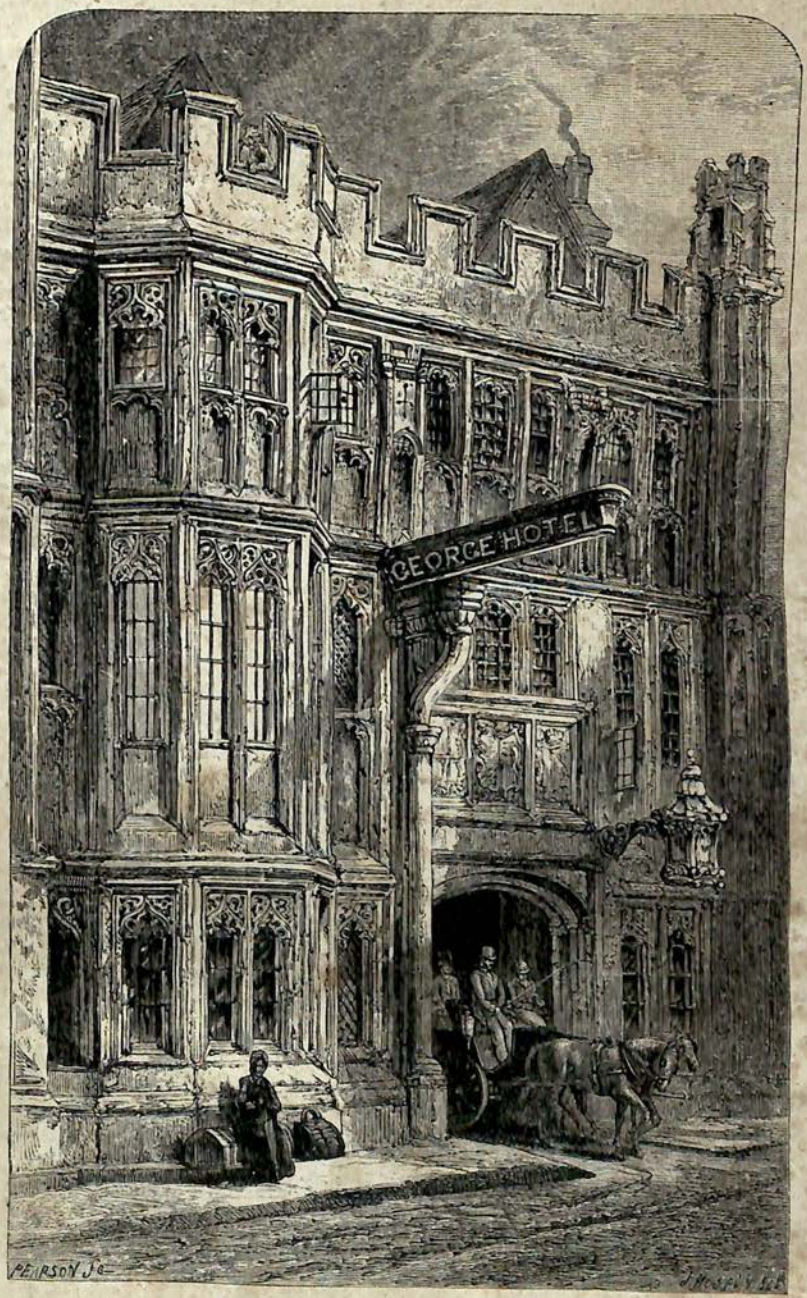
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WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 28 December, 2018

London to Land's End

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON



THE GEORGE HOTEL, GLASTONBURY.

[See page 359.

ON THE BOX SEAT

From London to Land's End

BY

JAMES JOHN HISSEY

AUTHOR OF
'AN OLD-FASHIONED JOURNEY' 'A DRIVE THROUGH ENGLAND' ETC.

E5364

'Life has little better to offer than this'

Dr Johnson to Boswell whilst posting across country



WITH SIXTEEN FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

LONDON
RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON STREET
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen
1886

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TO

THE FONDLY CHERISHED MEMORY

OF

MY LOVING WIFE

"Somewhere is comfort, somewhere joy,
Though thou in outer dark remain,
One sweet sad voice ennobles death,
And still for eighteen centuries
Sayeth softly 'Ye meet again'"

PREFACE.

RAILWAYS have killed road travel, and the present generation little knows its loss. England — rural England, that is—away from busy towns, railways, and tourist-haunted regions, where big hotels abound, and where enterprise has done its best to mar its original unaffected beauty, is indeed a very pleasant land, one surely as well worth exploring as the everlasting Continent. Hidden away in it, odd nooks and corners are to be found, quaint unsophisticated people, old-time towns and villages that might be foreign but for the names around, unheeded beauty spots, and last but by no means least, many an old-fashioned hostel, comfortable and cosy, with good-natured landlord or motherly landlady, who will make the traveller heartily welcome, and entertain him perchance as well with a delightful chat about past times, or retail to him the local gossip, and recount for his special benefit the country family

traditions—worth hearing these oftentimes. Such are some of the good things reserved for the fortunate traveller by road.

The scenery of rural England is truly idyllic, a perpetual poem. Full of homeliness, mellow, essentially lovable, eye-refreshing and heart-delighting, it never fails to please. But to know it you must journey along the old highways and by-ways (so deserted now) either driving or afoot, whichever opportunity or inclination may dictate, but go by road you must. No Englishman knows the real beauties of his birthland who has not done this; and what glorious prospects, what miles upon miles of ever changing loveliness, do not these old roads afford! Rushing through the country by rail, stopping at fashionable resorts, exploring for ever the old beaten tracks, will no more reveal what Old England is like, than a drive down Gower Street would tell a stranger what sort of a city London was.

Small though Britain is, its marvellous wealth of ever varying beauty perfectly astonishes me. For years past now have I driven hither and thither about in it, and the more I see of my native land the more I feel there is to see. I have not yet, full well I know, exhausted a tithe of its beauties. Truly, as Emerson says, 'it would take a hundred years to do so;' and that

would not, I venture to say, suffice. I know I write as an enthusiast, and due allowance must be made for the fact; but taking this into consideration, I think it a thousand pities we do not travel less abroad and more at home.

It is true that during our journey we touched now and again upon well-known ground. This was inevitable; but between such spots stretch endless panoramas of scenic loveliness, almost wholly unseen since the railways came into the land—unknown even to exist, I will venture to assert, to thousands of worthy Britons, who have explored all lands but their own, from far-off Japan to foreign realms nearer home.

Ours was surely an ideal holiday, always in the midst of beautiful scenery, masters of our time and conveyance, free from fatigue, the worry of luggage, the bondage of time tables, and the hundred and one petty annoyances that beset the ordinary traveller.

The illustrations, I trust, may add to the interest of the book. These, with one or two exceptions, are not those of well-known places, often painted, much engraved, and photographed by the thousand—scenes by all these means multiplied exceedingly, and thus made as familiar almost as our every-day surroundings. Rather have I chosen from my sketch book those odd

out-of-the-way bits, none the less beautiful because so little known or famed—the more to be appreciated, I trust, for their freshness. I have to express my indebtedness to Mr. Pearson for the feeling and successful manner in which he has rendered my drawings.

J. J. H.

SOUTH KENSINGTON: 1886.

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ON THE BOX SEAT.

CHAPTER I.

Our Journey planned—The pleasantest way of Travelling—On the Road—Green Fields *versus* Bricks and Mortar—A fine Day—Barnes Common—A House with a History—Richmond Park—Sketching Grounds near London—An extensive Prospect—Kingston-on-Thames—An ancient Stone—Leatherhead—Burford Bridge—A peculiar River—Thoughts of the Past—Historic Ground—Old Coach Roads.

WHERE shall we go this year? This was the question my wife asked me one summer evening. We were tired of the noise and bustle of town; we longed to exchange its smoke-laden atmosphere and dusty streets for the fresh green fields and pure blue skies of the free open country, to enjoy the restful quiet of rural sights and scenes, to breathe once again the unpolluted air, to get beyond the reach and worry of letters and telegrams, and to be relieved for a time from the many restraints and conventionalities of society.

Each summer for some years past we had taken driving tours, extending for some hundreds of miles through different portions of Great Britain, being away from home for two or three months upon each of such occasions; and most thoroughly did we enjoy our holidays on wheels, wandering uncontrolled whither we would. A more delightful or a more independent

way of travelling—at least, so to us it seemed—there could not be. Not, therefore, how we should go, but only where, was the question to be discussed.

Having decided that the time had arrived on which to start upon our summer outing, the corner in the library where sundry road and guide books lay concealed was duly ransacked, various maps were looked up, and a long and delightful discussion ended in our selecting Devonshire and Cornwall as our ultimate destination. Our route, it was determined, we would settle upon in detail each day as we progressed and circumstances might dictate. Perfect freedom was our motto; we did not wish to be bound down by any prearranged plan or plans; that would have been contrary to the very spirit of the journey, and have spoilt its special charm. No; we would be thoroughly independent; would go where we liked, start when we chose, and rest when and where we pleased. Such freedom was the essence of our tour.

The very thought of our expedition brought before us visions of bright green fields, of far-stretching breezy moorlands, with their tonic-laden air, of winding country roads and tree-shaded rural lanes, of picturesque villages, of quaint old-world restful hostelries, of gurgling streams and peacefully flowing rivers, of resinous-scented pine woods and heather-clad wilds, of time-worn ruins and ancient manors, of comfortable-looking farmhouses and peaceful homesteads that—away from railways and the busy haunts of men—abound throughout this favoured land.

Of all the different methods of travel, driving by road is surely the most natural and pleasurable. By railway you are simply conveyed from place to place

much as a parcel is; you have no command over your conveyance; you are wholly at the tender mercy of time tables. On it you are whirled through space at so many miles an hour—the faster the better—who ever travels by rail for the mere pleasure of travelling? Such speed is of course delightful to those who simply wish to arrive at the end of their journey with as little delay as possible; but for the man who desires to see and really know something of the country through which he passes, with its ever-changing scenes and incidents, the rail is but a poor substitute for the road.

Slow indeed compared to the iron steed is the speed of the fastest horse; slow to us now seems the haste of the departed mail coach; slower still was our method of travelling, limited, as we were, both in pace and distance to the endurance of our horses. But still for all this we travelled as fast and as far *per diem* as we wished; indeed, generally we found our time all too short for the many things there were to do and see each day. We did not reckon the beauties of the scenery by the amount of ground traversed; nor did we journey guide book in hand to complete any definite itinerary. We travelled above all to enjoy ourselves, and we did so. Twenty miles a day (our average distance), granting one day's rest in seven to the horses, gives a hundred and twenty miles a week, or over five hundred miles a month; and a drive of twenty continuous miles through almost any English county affords a wealth of beauty, experiences, and scenes enough surely to satisfy the most devoted sightseer.

Perhaps the pleasantest and quickest way out of the west end of the wilderness of brick and stucco that composes modern London is over Hammersmith

Bridge, thence across Barnes Common, and so on through Richmond Park, joining the old high roads beyond. And this was the route we selected by which to start upon our summer wanderings.

It is with a feeling almost amounting to sadness I have noticed how steadily, year by year, the green fields are being swallowed up by the inevitable progress of bricks and mortar, town everlastingly encroaching upon the country, beauty continually being overwhelmed by ugliness. Trees are ruthlessly cut down, meadows we used to look lovingly on are, alas! no more, and others are being laid out in roads, and fenced off in lots—facts but too plainly bespeaking their future fate. A rural lane (a delightfully secluded spot considering its nearness to town) that we half hoped against reason might have escaped the eye of the speculative builder, has been widened and straightened, formal fences have taken the place of the old tangled hedgerows, and drain pipes are laid suspiciously along one side of the ancient footpath. The pleasant-looking old-fashioned red-tiled farmhouse is deserted; a large board is erected in the now neglected garden with the announcement, 'This eligible land to be let on building leases.' So ceaselessly London extends its borders; no quarter is given to the green fields, familiar and favourite landmarks are obliterated, pet spots that we have come to look upon as old friends are no more, and we part from them with sorrowful regret.

Fortune favoured us in respect of weather on the day we left town. A fine morning with a bright blue sky overhead greeted us, and a pleasant soft wind met us as we drove along. The monotonous suburbs appeared their best and brightest under the cheerful

sunshine: the gardens of the numerous villas looked especially gay.

Hammersmith Bridge was duly crossed, and we quickly arrived at Barnes Common, sweet scented with golden gorse; this bit of wild ground, house-surrounded as it was, gave us a suggestion of the multitude of good things that were in store for us when the real open country should be at last reached.

Just before arriving at the Common we passed by Barnes Elms, a house with a history. This old England of ours is studded with ancient mansions, manor houses, and other antique buildings, which abound in old-world memories, and often possess a fund of archæological interest. It has too a priceless inheritance, the dower of stored-up traditions of many centuries—traditions stretching back far away into the dim uncertain long ago, even to the days of the renowned King Arthur and his gallant knights. As an instance of this, let us just take a brief glance at the storied past of this old place. Its annals commence as early as the tenth century, it being granted at that period by Athelstane to the Church. Successive men, some of note, held it till the time of 'Good Queen Bess,' in whose reign Sir Francis Walsingham leased the house. Elizabeth thrice visited him here, journeying by water in regal state, and was right royally entertained by her grateful subject. Later on, the unfortunate Earl of Essex held possession, and it was also the residence of Chancellor Beale, bearer of the fatal death warrant to the unhappy Queen of Scots. The poet Cowley also for a time dwelt here, in 1663, but it was too near town to satisfy his love of retirement. Samuel Pepys, however, of diary renown, and possessing a

wholly different temperament, found the spot very agreeable to his tastes, and much enjoyed his stay with the poet. Barnes Elms also was the scene of the memorable duel that took place in January of the year 1678, in which the Duke of Buckingham killed the Earl of Shrewsbury. During the encounter it is stated that Lady Shrewsbury actually held Buckingham's horse, disguised in the attire of a groom. To pass over sundry other possessors, some of whom were men of note, we come to the time when the renowned Kit-Cat Club held their meetings here in a room especially built for the purpose, the walls of which were adorned by portraits of the members, including a host of distinguished men—Walpole, the Duke of Marlborough, Addison, and Steele being amongst the number. The toasting glasses of the club were inscribed with the various healths drunk to the celebrated beauties of the day: the most noted of these were the four fair daughters of the Duke of Marlborough, far famed for their exceeding loveliness. And now, to descend to the present times, another club, the Ranelagh, has entered into possession of this historic mansion—a rare heritage surely!

But to return to ourselves. Proceeding on our way, we soon reached Sheen, passing through which we entered Richmond Park. What a grand breathing spot this is for Londoners! Here well within a dozen miles of the city are to be found secluded glades with fine old oaks, whilst underfoot the bracken is knee-deep; here and there, too, the sparkle of distant pools of water delights the eye, and wandering deer and an occasional scampering rabbit afford life to the scene. These altogether give to one the feeling, though so

near, of being leagues away from the 'busy haunts of men.' As we drove through this fine park, we met or saw but few people; a lady and gentleman on horseback, a carriage driving leisurely along, and now and again a solitary wayfarer afoot, were all we observed—otherwise we had it to ourselves.

I have often wondered why the more remote and secluded portions of this grand expanse of undulating and well-wooded domain are not more visited. Hidden away in it here and there, are bits that would delight the eye of a landscape painter, and he could be almost as much alone in them as he would be were he sketching in the comparatively remote artist-haunted Wales. Bits, too, there are that deserve his best skill; we especially noticed one such, an old gnarled oak with rough-barked massive trunk and far-spreading limbs, its foot hidden by the tall bracken, a fine study of form and colour. Near the road leading out to Ham Common is a particularly charming dell, in which sleeps a stilly tree-fringed pool, looking like a fragment of fallen sky—a sparkling gem, in a setting of dark-green woods. I wonder if a sketch of this were made, whether anyone would ever imagine the subject was taken from a spot so near to town—hardly, I think. It is wonderful how much good sketching ground there still remains unspoilt, even at the present day, almost within hearing of the sounds of the mighty busy Babylon.

Nearing Kingston Gate, the views from the high ground, westward, are especially fine and panoramic. It was a clear day, and knowing exactly where to look, we could just make out Windsor Castle, a mass of soft pale grey, dimly outlined against the sunlit sky.

A well-wooded far-stretching country lay spread out between us and it, miles upon miles of changeful greenery fading gradually away into a dreamy mystery of distant blue ; and here and there we caught a peep of the placid Thames, winding throughout the goodly prospect like a streak of molten silver. What a life-giving charm and brightness a river gives to a landscape ! England is such a well-watered country, that an untravelled inhabitant can hardly imagine how the absence of water is felt in a prospect otherwise fine ; the eye wanders over the most glorious panorama dissatisfied without this adjunct to the scene ; the reason for this dissatisfaction may not at first be apparent, but in time the cause is discovered, and the eye, feeling the deficiency, refuses to be contented without it. Some of the finest scenery in California depressed, instead of pleasing me, from this very want.

Looking towards Kingston, we noticed that town half hidden in the picturesque haze of its own smoke ; for smoke can be picturesque at times—witness the fine lurid sunsets so often seen through the sulphur-laden atmosphere of London. The ugly tower of Kingston's much restored church told darkly out of the midst of the blue-grey haze, its square top and flagstaff giving it much the appearance, from our point of view, of the donjon of an old feudal castle, keeping watch and ward over the place. Our thoughts were free, and we chose to imagine it so for the moment. If only we could sometimes turn into a reality the poetic conceptions of our brain, what a romantic world this might be! It is a harmless amusement to occasionally conjure up to ourselves pleasing pictures out of our matter-of-fact everyday surroundings.

Away beyond this little riverside town, the Surrey hills were plainly visible, an undulating outline of a pale tender blue, leading our eyes into the far-off country, and the sight caused us to hasten along to get amongst them. So we drove on at a good speed, descending Kingston Hill at a smart trot—Gallows Hill it used to be called, a gallows having been erected upon it in past days, whereon the bodies of sundry unfortunate highwaymen were suspended, as a gentle hint to others of the fraternity what they might expect should they fall into the hands of the law. However, such warnings were of little avail; chance counts for a good deal in this world, and like a soldier the highwayman of old trusted to his luck to escape misadventure.

Kingston, considering its distance from town (only twelve miles by direct road), has maintained its old-time appearance to a considerable extent, although around it many new-looking villas have sprung up, to make way for which not a few picturesque houses of ancient date have been improved out of being; and notwithstanding the fact that in the place itself stucco buildings and plate glass have asserted their objectionable existence, it still possesses a certain flavour of antiquity which was very pleasing after our monotonous drive through the meaningless erections it has pleased the speculative builder to raise in and about London.

We baited our horses here at one of the old-fashioned coaching inns of the place, an inn that appears to have changed but little in spite of the altered times; and whilst our steeds were enjoying their oats and a short rest, we took a stroll round the town, and paid a visit of inspection to the ancient and carefully preserved relic, called the king's stone, which,

according to tradition, was used as a throne for the Anglo-Saxon sovereigns. It may have served such a purpose, or it may not—it certainly is old enough looking; and besides, are not the names of the kings that were crowned upon it carved round its base in curious lettering? So, being in no sceptical mood that day, we felt bound to believe in it.

Leaving Kingston, we entered at last upon the open country. Genuine green meadows and tilled fields made their appearance; the cottages and farm-houses were really old ones, with nothing suggestive of town about them. Very restful and pleasant did all these things seem after our long imprisonment amid our usual smoke-stained street surroundings, and how delightfully did the picturesque rural homes contrast with the pretentious suburban buildings, the prim villas, and eminently respectable residences we had so lately left behind!

It is the town dweller who most appreciates the beauties of the country; those that live all the year round in the midst of scenes of great natural loveliness seem to get so accustomed to their surroundings that familiarity breeds, not contempt certainly, but indifference. That which we have always with us, that which we can obtain for the asking, we seldom value. Only when we have it not, do we feel its worth.

We had an enjoyable drive on to Leatherhead, but did not rest there, though the little inn looked very inviting as we passed by, and half tempted us to cut our day's wanderings short. However, we resisted its attractions, and proceeded on our way to Burford Bridge, our intended destination for the night, the road from Leatherhead to which place is one of great

beauty, and might almost be called classic ground, for many famous literary men, and women too, have had their permanent and temporary abodes in this pretty valley.

The quaint old-fashioned inn at Burford Bridge appeared very picturesque and all that a wayside hostelrie should be as we drove up to it on that calm summer evening; and quickly after our arrival there our belongings were got down from the phaeton, our horses stabled and enjoying a well-earned rest. And so ended our first day's pilgrimage.

We found this small unpretentious hostel both homely and comfortable, two excellent qualifications for an inn to possess. An ancient building it is, with an old-world flavour, free from the so-called modern improvements, the very antithesis to the gigantic hotels that our age so rejoices in, hotels which are perforce managed on factory-like principles, and where the traveller loses all individuality, and becomes a mere number—such places delight us not. Picturesquely situated it is too, nestling under the foot of the famous Box Hill, tree-surrounded and with a quiet flowing river and time-toned bridge close at hand. Moreover we discovered it possessed a capital garden (would all country inns had such !), and in this we wandered during the cool of the evening, watching the golden glories of the sunset sky, watching till the soft shadows, slowly stealing all around us, filled our little world with darkness; then, chancing to look upwards, we noticed a solitary star softly shining in the deep blue dome above. Oh, the tranquil loveliness of that summer night, the refreshing fragrance of the balmy perfume-laden air, the peaceful silence all around, the solemn beauty of the

starlit sky—how can words describe the gladness that all these raised within us?

Late, very late, was it before we retired to rest, unwisely long we roamed about that old garden, little heeding the risk of catching cold or the evils supposed or real of the night air; we felt far too romantic to think of such things. We felt also supremely at peace with ourselves and all the rest of the world; had our worst enemy (presuming we have any, which I trust we have not) come just then and begged a favour of us, I doubt not but that we should have granted it. We rejoiced in the thought that our journey, long talked of, had at last actually commenced, and in the knowledge that our holiday was all unspent before us, our pleasant rovings were only just begun. Our future was a delightfully unknown quantity, and on that very account all the more enjoyable. One of the great pleasures of our mode of travel is the charming uncertainty of it. Often and often when we start out in the morning we have no idea, or at best a very hazy one, as to where our quarters for the night will be.

The little river Mole, that flows past Burford Bridge, is a singular stream in one respect, and certainly earns its name; during dry summers, in places it occasionally entirely disappears underground, to reappear some distance farther on. The spots at which it goes to earth are known by the expressive name of 'swallows.' I believe there are one or two streams in Derbyshire and Somerset with this peculiarity, possibly others exist in England, but I am not aware of them.

Some places always impress me with the feeling that they have connected with them an old-time history, some stirring episode of past days, a romance that

only waits to be unearthed. Exactly why certain old places (especially inns) should so affect me, it is hard to say, but the sensation is a very real one. I can never enter an ancient weather-tinted coaching hostelrie without conjuring to myself some adventure in which the old 'knights of the road' figure prominently; and when I look round the coffee-room of such, I fill it in my mind's eye with the guests of generations long since departed. That low-ceilinged, oak-beamed chamber, with its ample fireplace and lattice-casement windows, all so desolate looking and deserted, is not so to me. I picture it—somewhat as it may perchance have appeared one winter night—with sundry travellers sitting and chatting round a roaring fire in the high antique grate. The ruddy glare of the burning logs lights up the little circle gathered round them, leaving the other end of the room in a dim obscurity. Now and again, first one and then another of the weather-bound travellers (for it is snowing hard without) give furtive glances towards the dark end of the room, for two suspicious strangers are seated there, strangely silent; they were not fellow-travellers by the coach, nor are their manners reassuring, nor does the landlord know anything of his taciturn guests. The question is, who can they be? *I* know well who they are—but a truce to romancing, it is our old-fashioned hostelrie that caused my thoughts to wander thus, for humble though it is, it has many associations of the past bound up with it. From here it was that Nelson started upon his last journey to join the fleet at Portsmouth, leading it to glorious victory, in gaining which he lost his life and won undying fame. It is recorded that when Napoleon was informed of his defeat, he

exclaimed, 'Defeat! it is a victory; I have got rid of Nelson.' Here too it was that Keats wrote the greater portion of his 'Endymion,' and doubtless other famous men have had their temporary abode in this unassuming wayside inn.

I wonder whether it would be possible to drive over any dozen miles of English ground without coming across some spot around which cling memories and traditions of the long ago. Why there is not even an old coach road without abundant legends of bygone days; if only the walls of some of the ancient hostelries could speak, what might they not relate? Our highways were at one time dotted all over with them, and within their four walls many men of world-wide renown have in the past taken shelter, many a roystering company have met; for then those who travelled at all were obliged to go by road, and the old inns were filled with guests of all degrees, from my lord of the Privy Council to the plain yeoman taking his first visit to town.

It has sometimes struck me what a delightful and interesting excursion it would make to start from London and follow one of these old roads all the way to its final destination: say to take the great north road to Edinburgh, or Telford's famous mail road to Holyhead (both of which afford a wonderful panorama of scenic loveliness), to drive the whole of the way, staying at the same old inns as far as possible that our forefathers did. Alas! though many of these remain to us, their glory has departed with the coaches, they are but ghosts of their former selves; still we may even now recall to mind, without a heavy strain on the imagination, something of what they were like in the

heyday of their prosperity. The country, however, has not changed in the same degree; much as we see it now, so did the travellers of old; it may possibly have altered to a certain slight extent, but not sufficiently to materially vary its general aspect. In spite of railways, electricity, and our nineteenth-century civilisation, Old England is Old England still.

CHAPTER II.

Dorking—The Original of the Marquis of Granby—A famous Character—The Pleasures of the Unknown—Wild Surrey—Hindhead Hill—The Virtue of Distance—Americans and English Scenery—A Heath Land—The Music of the Woods—An eccentric Economist—A Rural Church—A curious Will—A Relic of Charles I.—An Englishman's Home not his Castle—Evelyn's Diary—Devil's Mills—'Hammer' Ponds—A primitive Village—A Whipping Post—Strange Coincidences—An ideal Hamlet—Old-world Interiors—A famous unfought Battle—Fiction and Fact—'Mummy' Wheat.

We had splendid weather in which to proceed with our journey; the morning dawned with goodly promises—a morning of blue sky and warm sunshine, the heat being pleasantly tempered by a cool refreshing breeze; yet withal there was no disagreeable glare of light. Tempted by the day, we made an early start.

Leaving our comfortable quarters at Burford Bridge, we soon reached Dorking, and as we trotted along its main street, we noticed, as we passed by, the ancient hostelrie where on a previous tour we had spent the night in the quaintest of old panelled rooms—a room eminently suggestive of ghosts and bygone generations of travellers. In this same chamber we were told Cardinal Wolsey had once slept when journeying this way: there was nothing certainly in its antique appearance to cause us to discredit the story.

The post office here occupies the site of the 'Old King's Head.' This ancient inn was famous in its

day as being the one from which Dickens drew his picture of the Marquis of Granby, the abode, it will be remembered (in fiction), of that well-known individual 'Mr. Weller senior.' A horse trough that once stood in front of this spot is presumably the one in which the head of the unlucky Mr. Stiggins was plunged by that enraged individual.

There formerly resided in Dorking an old stage-coachman of the name of Weller, who in his early years drove the coach here; from this fact and his resemblance to the ideal creation of a similar cognomen, there is little room to doubt but that he was the original from which Dickens evolved his famous character.

Our road soon became hilly and wound about in a delightfully uncertain manner, revealing ever and again unexpected peeps of much beauty that quite enchanted us, so little did we expect the good things that were in store for us that day. Scenery that comes upon you as a surprise is always the most pleasing; it is a good thing, in a scenic sense, to have the unknown before you, that very fact keeps the mind in a delightful state of expectancy. On the other hand, a pre-knowledge of what is coming does away with all the charms of anticipation, and deprives us besides of the possibility of discovering for ourselves beauty spots either little heeded or not recognised by the general public. And do we not always take a special interest and pleasure, even a pride, in that which we find out for ourselves—do we not also feel a kind of proprietary right to such in virtue of our discovery? Scenery also that has become famous and is highly praised (however beautiful), often at first disappoints us by reason of its very

fame: our imagination is highly wrought by all we have heard and read about it, and thus we are led to expect too much. For this very cause, I feel bound to confess, I was even for a time disappointed with the grandeur and majesty of Niagara.

The whole of our drive from Dorking to Guildford was one of great beauty and interest; hardly a mile of it but some old home or spot called up recollections of past people or past times. Rural Surrey, and this particular portion especially, is a most lovely county—would there were more of it—there is hardly a parish within its borders but possesses either its village green or open common, wild heather-land or spreading down. In proportion to its extent the public and waste lands in Surrey are very large, beginning close to town with Barnes Common and Richmond Park; and until we left it, we were hardly ever out of sight of some bit of open land, of a more or less wild and natural aspect.

It is a county with a characteristic beauty, peculiarly its own, and not to be found elsewhere; in it cultivated lands and wild scenes are pleasantly commingled, and contrasted delightfully with each other; considerable portions of its area are covered with fir forests, whose aromatic recesses afford very delightful wanderings. Some of its scenery, although it is a home county and bordering upon London, actually in places approaches the grand. The bold Hindhead Hill, seen dark under a louring sky, has a truly striking effect; witness Turner's representation of it in his 'Liber Studiorum;' you might travel hundreds of miles and see nothing of its kind finer or so fine. It has a simple impressiveness that larger hills and even many mountains fail to convey. Size after all is only relative; there



A SURREY COMMON.

is a grandeur of form and colour as well as of mere height, and these often take the greater hold upon the imagination of the two. Unfortunately Surrey does not possess the virtue of being far away, or it would surely be more appreciated than it is. It is too near our own doors to be properly valued. Why it is we should esteem that the most which is remote and comparatively difficult of access, just for those very reasons, is a problem I can never hope to solve. How much do we not miss by straining after the distant beauties of foreign lands, whilst we leave all unheeded those readily accessible at our own doors! But so it is all the world over. 'A prophet has no honour in his own country.'

There are many Americans, I have met not a few, who know more of England than the majority of Englishmen, and have even reproached us for our want of knowledge of our own land; and yet, strange to say, some of these said Americans I have discovered, upon questioning them, have never seen even Niagara, and to many the Yosemite, the Yellowstone valleys, and other Western wonders are all unknown except by fame. There must surely be some special quality in mere distance, not readily explainable or to be reasoned upon; or is it that those things we can see any day, we seldom see?

Shortly after leaving Dorking we came upon a pleasant stretch of wind-swept heath-land with clusters of graceful firs on either side of the way; these were bending and swaying before the summer wind, giving forth at the same time that indescribable 'sur, sur, sur,' that is so soothing and charming to listen to, reminding one as it does of the distant murmuring of the far-off

sea. We shut our eyes and tried to imagine we could really hear the soft undertones of the waves lap, lap, lapping up on some solitary surf-beaten shore. So alike are these two sounds, that anyone being led blindfolded to such a spot on such a day could hardly, I think, tell whether it was to sea-music or tree-melody he was listening.

Leaving the heath, we soon reached the little hamlet of Westgate. Here at the Rookery, in a house still standing, the eccentric economist Malthus was born in 1766, whose peculiar ideas respecting population are well known. I must own that at times when passing through some of the close crowded courts that abound in our overgrown London, with all their misery and dirt, I have felt inclined to sympathise with his views, and to believe that the world, or England at any rate, was getting in truth too populous.

Another mile or so of pleasant driving brought us to Wotton. Dismounting here, we paid a visit to the quaint little tree-girt church of the place, a picturesque edifice, that has been sketched, painted, and photographed times without number. The special feature of this rural fane is its curious tower of ancient date: whatever may be its merits or demerits (architecturally speaking), it struck us as being delightfully picturesque and charmingly original. Whoever designed it must have been a genius in his way, certainly he was no slavish copyist of other people's works; or perchance it may own its existence to no special designer, it may have become what it is by the lucky and somewhat rare accident of happy alterations in times past. Not that there is anything wonderful about the tower in question, indeed it is an exceedingly simple structure, as becomes

a quiet country church; but its outline is pleasing, novel, and full of character, yet free from any suspicion of studied eccentricity. If it has a fault, it is that perhaps it asserts itself too much, giving one the impression that the tower exists for the church, and not the church for the tower.

In the God's acre here is shown the tomb of one William Glanville, who by his will appointed 'that forty shillings should be paid annually to each of five poor boys of the parish who, upon the anniversary of his death, should be able to repeat the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and read the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.' He must have been a strange man to have inserted such a clause in his will!

Wotton House, one time the residence of John Evelyn, was hidden amidst foliage on the other side of the road, so we could not see the old mansion. It is still in possession of his family, and in it, we were informed, are preserved the MS. of his famous Diary, also a prayer book, bloodstained, which is stated to have been used by Charles I. at his execution, and other relics of more or less interest, but as the house is 'not shown,' and no exception made to the rule, even to pilgrims like ourselves, we were obliged to proceed on our way, and leave the said relics unseen. We learnt afterwards that there are a good many people who consider it ill-natured of Mr. Evelyn not allowing his house to be shown. We certainly, though disappointed in not being able to inspect the ancient treasures it contains, did not view matters in the same light, nor can I understand why anyone should expect an English gentleman to allow his house to be made

free to strangers against his wishes. Surely everyone has a perfect right to enjoy his home in peace and privacy if he so will, without being reproached for so natural a desire? Some people, however, it would seem, appear to think otherwise; indeed, I have been told upon good authority that a certain kindly disposed nobleman in the North country, who generously permits his fine mansion to be inspected on stated days, has been obliged to place certain necessary restrictions upon the liberties granted to the numerous sightseers, and his so doing has actually caused some considerable ill feeling in the neighbourhood. The inhabitants around had come to look upon the kindness shown to them more in the light of a right than a favour.

It was during the reign of the dissolute monarch Charles II. that John Evelyn retired to his ancestral home here, in order to escape from the frivolities of the Court, and he occupied his time in writing his Diary, and gathering information for his work on Forest Trees, one of the most interesting of its kind extant. A great admirer of our woodlands, Evelyn describes them lovingly. Pines, it would seem, were his especial favourites, and he states that 'their odoriferous and balsamical emissions' are very beneficial to the air. Though a practical business man, and showing great shrewdness in the majority of his actions and observations, he appears to have possessed a strange and astonishing belief in the healing virtues of certain decoctions, distillations, and extracts of the barks, fruits, and leaves of various trees.

Evelyn's Diary is even in some respects more interesting than that of his friend Pepys; for though less in volume, it ranges over a greater extent of time, practi-

cally covering a period reaching from the days of Charles I. to those of Queen Anne. And what a contrast there is between the notes and observations of the two men!—the one, Pepys, an admirer of towns and gaiety, never happy save in a crowd; the other, like White of Selborne, an intense lover of the country with its rural pursuits, and a great student of nature. How distinctly the two diaries reveal the wholly opposite characters of the writers!

Upon a little stream that flows by this spot was erected one of the first, if not the very first, powder mills in England; and, as may be imagined, in those early days of such establishments disastrous explosions were of frequent occurrence, the primitive inhabitants of the surrounding country being almost frightened out of their wits from time to time by them. It is hardly to be wondered at that a contemporary writer should call these manufactories 'devil's mills.'

This rural-looking country bore long years ago quite a different aspect from its present peaceful one. It was then, strange though such a fact may appear now, a busy manufacturing centre; there were iron-works here of considerable extent (for the period), besides numerous brass-smelting furnaces. Abinger Hammer, a small hamlet we passed farther on our way, was given its name on account of the many 'hammering' or forging mills that once flourished there. Even to this day many relics of those far-off times are plainly visible in the shapes of hillocks of ancient refuse, now all grass-grown, thriving spots for nettles, thistles, and briars. These mounds, it has been discovered by digging, consist almost wholly of masses of clinkers and black ashes. Old dams are also visible showing where

of yore the streams were banked up, in order to afford the necessary water supply for the mill wheels. Many large pools thus formed still exist in various parts of the county, and these are yet locally called 'hammer ponds.'

That the almost purely agricultural counties of Surrey and Sussex were erst busy manufacturing centres, seems quite to have passed out of present remembrance, so pastoral and anti-commercial do they now appear. What changes time brings about! It is hard to realise that this bright portion of England, where the air is so pure and the sun shines so cheerily, was once our 'black country:' in those days the present dreary desolation in the North known by that unenviable title—I refer specially to the desert wilderness around Birmingham and Wolverhampton—was a smiling land of corn fields and green meadows. The blessings of adjacent coal fields and iron beds have altered all this. True the beautiful country there is no more, true the clear crystal streams (once the abode of the speckled trout), streams that of old sparkled so joyously in the sun, now creep on poisoned and defiled and black like ink, true also that the stunted trees are bare and leafless, and that even the hardy grasses have a struggle to exist, true the blue sky is darkened, and the pure life-giving air is sulphur-laden. But what of all this? Is not the chief object of the present generation to make money?

Both in Surrey and Sussex relics of the 'iron age' are still observable in the many sign supports of wrought metal possessed by numerous inns and roadside taverns, the ornamental firebacks (much sought after by collectors and others), and the iron tomb memorials in several

churchyards. It may not be generally known that the old railings round St. Paul's Cathedral and those of nearly all the ancient houses and squares of London were made in either Surrey or Sussex. For the space of close upon two hundred years did this industry flourish in the South, till the decreasing supply of wood and the competition of the Northern coal country extinguished the trade.

From Wotton we made a short detour from the road to inspect the little village of Abinger, which a Scotch friend of ours told us he had come accidentally across during a walking tour; and so enchanted was he with the spot that he advised us, if ever in the course of our drives we should find ourselves in the neighbourhood, to be sure and not miss the opportunity of seeing it. Therefore, being in the locality, we felt bound to visit it. A tree-girt bird-beloved lane led us thither, and very pleased were we with the quiet spot, a retired nook of English ground, that impressed us with the feeling that by some unexplained magic we had surely suddenly stepped backward some two hundred years, and that such things as railways, telegraphs, and ironclads existed only in our heated imagination. Its secluded beauty charmed us, and its genuine naturalness was equally refreshing both to eye and heart. Not only did it give to us a feeling of remoteness of time, but of space as well—an impression that there were many leagues of ground between us and the mighty metropolis. Altogether the place is well worth a visit, as a specimen of an old English hamlet unspoilt by modern innovations, with all their slavish uniformities and depressing meannesses. The old homely artist-haunted hostel is suggestive of

plain comfort; the village green with its dilapidated stocks and whipping-post of long departed days, the undulating common with its goodly expanse, its Scotch firs, and wooded country around, of enjoyable rural rambles. Truly one might wander farther afield in search of the picturesque and fare worse. The most unsophisticated old-world places are often to be discovered within quite easy reach of our busiest towns.

Continuing on our way we came to a spot that arrested our attention, a bit of calm wood-surrounded water, a lakelet it might almost be called, one of nature's mirrors, bringing down a portion of the bright blue sky and reflecting as in a glass the trees and an old ruin on its banks. The strange thing about it was, we both simultaneously exclaimed as the scene came in sight, 'Why, I've seen that before.' Now, it so happened, neither of us had been in that part of the world until that day, and therefore we could not have done so, and yet the spot seemed perfectly familiar to us both. The water, the ruin, and trees were surely old friends? Here was a curious fact! The view was a most uncommon one, there could hardly be two such characteristic spots so much resembling each other in existence; the coincidence would be altogether too remarkable, yet how otherwise could the circumstance of our both recognising it be explained? It was some time before the mystery was cleared up. A sudden thought struck me that surely it must have been in a picture in the Academy we had seen a representation of it; and this proved to have been the case, my wife recollecting the painting when I spoke of it. The picture was called, if I remember correctly, 'He cometh not, she said.' We were pleased

to have so easily solved the puzzle. I wonder if other strange resemblances might be in some equally simple way explained? I believe it is an acknowledged physiological fact that some people have at various times, when visiting a place they have never been to before, been struck by their surroundings appearing quite familiar to them. This has occurred to me more than once, though never in such a pronounced manner as when we first came in sight of that quiet pool with its noticeable surroundings. I have at different times met various people who have told me that they have experienced this feeling, and could in no way account for it. One gentleman, an artist, told me that upon one occasion he had to make a call in a square in the far north of London, where certainly he had never been before, and upon arriving there all at once an impression came over him that he knew the square well, and that at the other end of it was an old pump, and he walked round to see, and, strangely enough, one was there just as he had pictured it. A doctor who had been called in to see a patient, to a house he had never to his knowledge entered before, relates as a curious fact that, on being ushered into the dining room, a feeling came over him that he knew it quite well, and that he recollected a certain peculiar knot in the shutter: so much was he impressed that he actually opened the shutter, and there, curiously enough, was the knot exactly as he had imagined it. The above are facts, strange ones certainly, but still facts, a rational explanation of which is by no means easy; still, as in our case, some solution of them may be found. Had I not remembered seeing that picture in the Academy, we should both of us have considered

the circumstance of our coming thus unexpectedly (in a portion of the country we had never been into before) upon a spot apparently perfectly familiar to us both, a spot with such individuality of scene that it could not possibly be mistaken for any other, a most unaccountable and extraordinary phenomenon.

We next came to Shere, the very *beau idéal* of an English village, with its picturesque church, in which sleep so peacefully the brave men of old beneath their stone-sculptured tombs and antique brasses, and without as calmly repose the humbler inhabitants of the past in their unremembered and unnoted grass-grown graves. There is to me something very touching in these hoary old churches that have outlived so many generations of worshippers, and will possibly outlive generations more, silently and solemnly standing everywhere throughout the land, surrounded by their mournful colony of departed humanity. Here we noticed some charming old-timbered houses, and the glimpses of one or two interiors we caught especially delighted us; one of these now rises up before me: an ancient bent-beamed unceilinged room, with a large hospitable-looking fireplace, and high mantel above, supporting sundry glowing copper and gleaming tin utensils, these possibly more for ornament than use. There was no 'patent range' hiding the cheery fire, but on the hearth were some flaming, crackling logs, kept in place by two primitive iron dogs, which sent forth the grateful incense of burning wood. Over the fire was an old-fashioned kettle suspended by a chain, a method of cooking probably as ancient or more ancient than the house. The window was a long lattice one, with diamond-leaded panes, deeply recessed; this was filled

with bright geraniums and fuchsias, flowers that seem specially to flourish in such spots, and are, therefore, almost universal favourites with cottagers. The floor of the room was formed of red bricks or tiles, and had a warm, mellow tone, and contrasted well with the blue delf-ware on the dresser shelves. Such interiors are full of character, and abound in a wealth of latent colour as well as in quaint forms; they possess, moreover, a mystery of shade, and are beloved of artists. This little village, it struck us, would form a capital hunting ground for painters in search of this class of subject. Possibly the ground is already familiar to them, for unless I greatly mistake, a certain curious fireplace I saw in one of these ancient kitchens is an old friend of mine—in pictures.

Whilst 'prospecting' the little inn, or rather public-house, of the village, to see if it appeared at all suitable to bait at, we were edified by overhearing an animated discussion going on within between some rustics over their beer anent the now famous, if imaginary, battle of Dorking. 'I tell 'ee,' said one, 'yer kno' nought about it; it were fought atween us and them French chaps, and they took the town——' Unfortunately we did not catch the conclusion of the sentence owing to the hum of many voices, so cannot give it complete. Our curiosity was, however, raised, and we stopped to see if we could gather any further information regarding this celebrated battle. Our waiting was rewarded; presently the strenuous voice of another party broke forth, plainly audible above the din of the somewhat noisy company: 'I tell yer, yer all wrong, it wern't wi' them French fellows at all; it were wi' the Germans, for my old missus, who is a scholard and

'a read the history of it, told I so, and it were a real bloody foight too, and they licked we at first.' Again the conclusion of the sentence was lost upon us owing to the general clamour, and possibly also owing to the fact that the speaker stopped to refresh himself, and continued his discourse in a less emphatic strain. We could not well stay longer listening, and as the place did not appear sufficiently attractive to induce us to rest there, we proceeded on our way; but we had heard enough to afford us both amusement and something to ponder over.

Here in this primitive village in the latter part of this nineteenth century, we discovered those to whom recent fiction was a past reality—a clever fable an actual fact! About the verity of the history not one of the company appeared to possess the slightest doubt, only as to between whom the battle was fought and the date thereof did they seem at all uncertain. And we thought to ourselves if by any strange chance in the long ages to come, when the proverbial New Zealander sits on the ruins of London Bridge, this little *brochure* should have been preserved and our other writings lost—a most improbable chance certainly, but no matter—how the scientific men of those days might grow serious, and hold heated disputes as to the actual locality of this great and decisive battle. And we wondered also whether any of the traditionary battles of old, in the days when the world was young, might have been in some similar manner conceived. Was Troy really captured as related, or is the history (recent discoveries notwithstanding, for as Dorking exists so may Troy have done) of its siege and fall a mere poetic fable? Who can say?

The next village, a little to the left of our road (our journey that day abounded in rural hamlets), Albury by name, boasts of the residence of Martin Tupper of 'Proverbial Philosophy' renown, and we were told that his works could be purchased in the grocer's shop there, but did not test the truth of our information. In Mr. Tupper's garden was first planted and grown the 'mummy' wheat; seed that had lain dormant for over three thousand years, buried with the embalmed dead in far-off Egypt, brought once again to light, and fructifying and giving its increase on English soil.

CHAPTER III.

A Spot to be remembered—Ancient Trees—An elevated Chapel—A Pilgrim's Way—A 'Colourless Land'—The Beauties of the Gorse—An Anecdote of Linnæus—Thoughts on Landscape Painting—Guildford—Old Houses—A Tradition—An antique Building—The Hog's Back—Peculiarity of Surrey and Sussex Hills—The Variety of Scenery in England—Travellers make their own Welcome—A Chat with a Bicyclist.

Soon after leaving Albury the road began to mount, and as we mounted so our horizon widened, till presently we reached Newlands Corner, a spot to be remembered. Here a noble panorama opened out before us; we looked down upon a world in miniature; our eyes wandered in a delightful uncontrolled freedom over waving masses of many-tinted woods, a mingling of russet greens and greys, stretching far away to the distant hills of misty blue.

We watched with unabated interest the play of light and shade beneath us, as the fleeting gleams of bright sunshine and grey cloud-shadows chased each other over the far-spreading landscape, gradually fading away and becoming fainter and fainter, till trailing along the remote hill-slopes they were lost to view.

Here and there curling wreaths of blue-grey smoke, lazily rising upwards, showed where some hidden village lay, sleeping tranquilly amid a wealth of foliage. You might wander far and long before you found a

fairer or a finer scene; and yet this was within almost a day's drive of populous London!

There was a delightful crispness in the air; high up as we were, there was nothing to obstruct the light bracing breezes. From off the sea at first they came wandering uncontrolled over the southern hills, tonic-laden and invigorating, and sweet-scented with the odours of gorse and fir.

We lingered long upon this spot, eye-entranced by the beauty of the prospect, and ear-enthralled by the soothing harmony of pleasant sounds; the joyous singing of birds and the musical humming of wandering bees, the silvery tinkling of some far-off bell, the lowing of distant kine, sounds softened and mellowed by space.

The scene close at hand was rendered impressive by some ancient yew trees, weird and solemn-looking, storm-rent and gnarled, telling black and spectre-like against the sunlit sky. These are said to mark the line of an old pilgrims' way, of which more hereafter. How aged are these gaunt gruesome trees, how many centuries is it since they were young? I should not like even to hazard a guess, so slow of growth and long of life are they, 'a living thing produced too slowly ever to decay.' According to Strutt, 'the yew can scarcely be said to die, as new shoots are perpetually springing out from the old and withered stock.' What is our little life to theirs? They count not their existence by heart-throbs; men have come and gone, kingdoms waxed and waned, empires risen and perished, whilst they have stood sadly, silently there. That a tree should outlive so many generations of man, should see so much of his handiwork begun, finished, and crumbled to dust, is a sad and humbling fact.

These trees with their intertwining, twisted, spreading boughs caused a deep, dismal, gloomy shade on the ground around—the wind as it came and went sighed in a mournful manner as it passed them by. They depressed us against our will, even on that bright glad summer day. Yew trees are doleful features in a scene; their proper home is the melancholy cheerless churchyard, not in the midst of a fair English landscape.

A most conspicuous object in the view from Newlands Corner, and one that compels attention, is St. Martha's Chapel, a solitary building standing right on the top of a bleak bare upland. We could not help asking ourselves why such an edifice was erected upon a spot so lonely and out of the way of all humanity. To attend worship at the chapel, the worshippers would need to be good climbers; and as for the old and feeble, the mount would be a serious consideration, if not an impossibility, for them; and for the strong and hearty, at best a hot dreary trudge in the warm summer days, and a cold bleak ascent in the winter time.

The early history of this elevated fane, the date and purpose of its foundation, are lost in the dim mistiness of antiquity. Manning says that he considers 'it was originally designed to serve as a chantry, erected very possibly over the graves of some Christians who suffered on this spot,' for, as he adds, 'it is not likely that a place intended for the ordinary services of religion should have been raised on a spot so difficult of access.' It, however, appears to me a more probable theory would be that it had some connection with the ancient pilgrims' way, which, though centuries have elapsed since such a track existed, can still in places be plainly traced. This path led in old times nearly directly from

Southampton to Canterbury, and tradition asserts that it was bounded by yew trees for nearly the whole of the distance: even now between Guildford and Reigate the road is irregularly marked by their scattered remains. This was the route followed by the pilgrims to the world-renowned shrine of St. Thomas à Becket, and it would pass close to the chapel; therefore I think it may reasonably be concluded this latter marked a stage of their journey, and was probably both a resting-spot and a place of worship for them.

We remained long gazing down upon the bewitching wide-sweeping panorama, drinking in the beauty and inspiration of the scene; and as we proceeded on our way we cast fond lingering looks behind us, and found it difficult to tear ourselves away from such a romantic locality. There are some spots that it is hard to bid farewell to, and this is one. However, we were surrounded by too much loveliness to be allowed to dwell for long on past scenes.

A waste corner by the wayside, covered with sweet-scented gorse making the air fragrant with its rich perfume, called forth from both of us an involuntary exclamation of admiration. Beautiful beyond words to describe was that tiny corner of lustrous glowing gold! Who was it called England 'a country of sad browns and greens'? England a colourless land! I wish the writer of those words had seen that little unheeded spot *all bursting with colour!* Surely a land in which the gorse, the broom, and purple heather grow, to say nothing of the crimson clover, the scarlet poppy, the yellow of the spreading wild mustard—the harebell and hyacinth making the woodland carpets in spring as blue as the sky above—and countless other plants and flowers

I could name—surely, as I have said, a land wherein these flourish does not deserve the taunt of being colourless. Sad browns and greens indeed! Some have surely eyes who cannot see! Why, almost any English meadow chosen at random, starred with daisies and bedecked with buttercups, gives an unqualified denial to the assertion.

But of the gorse, what a glorious plant it is! I would not exchange it for all the shrubs and flowers, resplendent though they are, of foreign lands; and I mean what I write. I wonder, is it because it is so familiar to us, we appreciate it so little. A common all aglow with the golden glories of this hardy ever-blooming shrub is a sight to behold: yet how few people seem to specially notice its wonderful loveliness. Were it a rare plant, doubtless it would be carefully cultivated in our gardens, and if delicate in our greenhouses even, and we should admire it and grow in raptures over it, as we do now upon some choice exotic. But it is no hothouse plant this, withered by the first blast of cold air. Rare though its beauties are, it receives neither care nor attention of any kind; it grows on the poorest land, it asks for nothing more than to be let alone, blooming and making the earth gay, as well in the cold cheerless winter as in the warm summer time.

It is recorded of Linnæus that when on a visit to this country he came one day suddenly and unexpectedly upon a common covered with gorse, and upon observing its golden sea of bloom he went on his knees in an ecstasy of delight, exclaiming that in all the world he had never beheld a sight so splendid. I do not know anything finer in its way—and it is by no

means a rare effect in our mountain lands—than a hill-side covered with the mingled blossoms of gorse and heather, lighted up by the noonday sun; a perfect miracle of colour, a glowing harmony of purple and gold, regal tints these!

I wonder whether certain artists, followers of the French school, are in any degree responsible for the idea, entertained by some, that England is a sombre land. Their landscapes of dull greys and russet browns are true to one effect out of Nature's countless stores, one truth, and that is all. Painters are they of a single fact, missing a hundred others in gaining the one; and however skilful they may be in rendering that sole effect, the skill is dearly bought at the price. A great painter will endeavour with the limited means at his disposal to secure as many facts as possible; sacrifice something he must in obtaining these, but he will sacrifice as little as he can. The worthiest picture is that which records the most facts (other things being equal) of the scene it represents. It may consist of a mere stretch of wild moorland, with a brooding sky above, brightened up perchance by a ray of solitary sunshine. A simple subject, the simpler the better; you may easily overcrowd your canvas with matter, though not with truths; and yet it may contain more in reality, be fuller fraught with translated facts, than a continent covered with the sand-coloured and dull green productions of this precious school of one effect.

Once upon a time (as the fairy stories say), in a weak moment, over-persuaded by an art critic, I was induced to purchase one of these sad grey pictures. I hung it in my room, and tried hard to like it—tried hard, for I had paid a long price for the painting—and

failed. It was not an honest engraving in black and white, or I could have forgiven it its shortcomings, but it professed to represent in all its wealth of real colouring an English landscape—a landscape, moreover, I knew well, and I learned to dislike it for its bold falseness. It was to me the embodiment of a lie in paint, as though I looked at Nature through a smoke-coloured glass.

It is to be hoped that the old traditions of the past great English masters of landscape art may again hold sway, and that the riches of Nature's colouring, the everlasting-changing tints of our insular scenery, its ever-varying light and shades, may once more glow on canvas. The French school possesses a wonderful knowledge of the technique of art, and a wonderful want of all that makes that technique valuable. A mere photographical or topographical reproduction of Nature does not of necessity form a picture. We want the motive, the soul of the painter, not a feelingless, colourless, secondhand camera obscura affair. You may compose and alter Nature if you will, and still have truth, but you cannot alter her colouring without being false. A great painter is by that very fact a great poet also, he is no mechanical copyist; the man himself is revealed in his work, he gives to it an individuality—call such an individuality his style if you so will. He may idealise Nature, most probably he does: to put poetry into the commonplace is art, but colour can never be idealised.

The country we passed through that day—a typical English country—how it abounded in subtle colouring! It was no grey world, even the very air quivered and trembled with a melting palpitating azure, growing

deeper and deeper as the distance lengthened. The landscape or rather series of landscapes was full of a soft restful green (the prevailing hue that served as a foil to set off all others), but everywhere mingled with this were greys and golds, russets, browns, and oranges, silvers, reds, and blues, a thousand changing tints blending with each other, commingling and contrasting in an indescribable mystery of subdued harmonies. How much unheeded beauty lies about us, in our everyday surroundings, a rich harvest for the charmed eye, love-trained to perceive what others will not see! Restless ever-varying tints are all around, changing with the changing sunshine: rosy in the early morning, silvery at midday, golden at noon, and flushed with the sunset's countless hues at night. Ask the French school for these—for these and much more: ask it for the molten gold and burning rubies of the gilded fire-lit clouds of the setting sun, for the diamond flashes, the iridescent hues, the sparkle and the glitter of the waterfall, for the sun-kissed empurpled mountain tops with their shades of throbbing transparent blue; ask it for the golden glories of autumn, for the topazes, sapphires, and amethysts of the sunlit lingering dewdrops, or for the soft silvery summer shower rainbow-arched with its heaven-born semicircle of opalescent loveliness. You may ask, but you will ask in vain; it knows them not.

A sensitised photographic plate is not equally affected by different colours: greens, yellows, and purples have a tendency towards blackness, blues and violets to whiteness; so in a landscape photogram the trees are always represented too dark, the skies too light, and so forth: the values are ever wrong. No

landscape will photograph correctly in tone for this very reason. A painting, however, of the French grey school nearly always takes well; here we have the testimony of a lens, free from any suspicion of bias, knowing neither prejudice nor aught of art or of conflicting schools, as to the untruth of the foreign method. We have had enough and to spare of art for French art's sake, we want now art for truth's sake: Nature as she is, with all her unequalled wealth of colour-beauty, not Nature as any school or schools says she ought to be.

That little spot of glowing gorse-clad ground it was that set our thoughts a-wandering thus, but they were quickly recalled to ourselves and our journey by noticing before us, in that strange hollow in the chalk hills, the red-bricked town of Guildford, half asleep under the warm sunshine. An old town is Guildford, no one can say exactly how old; it existed in King Alfred's time, this we know, and that is certainly enough to secure for it respect on the score of antiquity. Situated on the high road to Portsmouth, an important and busy one in the pre-railway age, its picturesque hilly High Street, which formed a portion of that thoroughfare, must have been the scene of much interesting life and bustle, especially in the not unfrequent war times. All day long postchaises and stage coaches must have clattered and rattled along it; the merry musical notes of the cheery tra-la-la of the guard's horn could have been but seldom absent. Now the traffic is but small, yet there still *is* traffic; the town is not one of those of the somnolent rural order that appear to dream their lives away, to have fallen asleep at the time the last coach took its last stage therein, and to

have gone on slumbering ever since, with no apparent prospect of awakening again.

The High Street of Guildford is, as I have said, a picturesque one; its old houses are suggestive of domestic prosperity and quiet comfort, as well as of peaceful abiding, the latter a something foreign to the present restless age of everlasting change, and endless comings and departings; they have too a look of being originally designed to suit the special tastes and whims even of those who first erected them. One house has evidently been built as it is because the former owner would have it thus and nohow else, another to suit the needs and specific requirements of its inhabitants, and still another to make the best of the ground upon which it stands. Thus, they each and all possess a pleasing variety and an individuality, a spontaneous livable look. Honest homes are they, the exteriors being the simple expression of internal requirements—homes built for the man, not man (as in the present year of grace and progress) made to suit the home—and thus they offer a striking contrast to the packing-case brick-and-mortar blank-wall square-holed order of architecture we have for so long put up with. Streets, terraces, and rows of these latter precious productions, are but too familiar features in our towns, streets and terraces in which the houses resemble each other, much as do peas in a pod, and which go to form a monotony of ugliness that makes our cities so depressing and uninteresting.

Only in rural country towns, that have not had all their picturesqueness and originality improved away, do we now, as a rule, find this appearance of fitness for the purpose, giving one the impression of a certain

home feeling, and that indescribable something which combined with a flavour of individuality lifts so many of our old towns, unpretending though they be, out of the atmosphere of the commonplace. Many of the houses of such, although they boast of no elaborate carved or chiselled fronts nor possess any architectural features worthy of special remark, are none the less gratifying to the beholder on that account; possibly indeed for that very reason they are the more pleasing, as proving that it is in nowise more difficult, or of necessity more costly, given the materials, to erect a pretty building than an ugly one. The old apology for the square-box style of houses, that 'they are plain substantial structures with no nonsense about them,' has surely done its duty; 'plain' they are beyond all doubt, and truly there is 'no nonsense about them,' and no anything else, only a certain space inclosed within four walls! Simple they are, but it is a simplicity without grace. Beauty costs no more than ugliness; a cottage may be easily made as charming and as attractive as a palace, and even much more so; pleasing shapes and colours are not more expensive than uncomely ones. And it should ever be remembered that beautiful homes help to make beautiful lives.

Guildford boasts of three churches, all spireless, and these have earned for the place a local taunt, as follows:

> Poor Guildford, proud people;
> Three churches, no steeple.

In the 'good old times' of Elizabeth it was required of all the citizens of the town that they should attend worship upon each Sabbath-day, or be fined a shilling;

let us hope the parson's sermons were not wearisome nor over-long.

Amongst the ancient buildings of Guildford worthy of note, besides the old churches and stern mediæval castle keep, are the quaint town hall with its open bell turret and projecting clock, the Elizabethan grammar school, and, what interested us by far the most, the antique Abbot's Hospital, a bit of Jacobean architecture. This time-toned structure of warm red brick, with grey stone facings, mullioned windows, wreathing chimneys, shaped gables and entrance tower, is eloquent of past memories, and long and lovingly we looked upon it. This old-fashioned eye-pleasing building was erected and endowed by George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was born in Guildford, being the son of a poor clothworker there, his birthplace being a very lowly cottage. It was one of those not unfrequent cases in the old times of poor boys becoming famous men, and proves how democratic was the Church, how above all things it was the Church of the people. The highest honours in its possession were within reach of the humblest of the land. The old monks, in spite of all that has been said against them, were the friends of the needy. 'A peasant lad could be taught in the monastic school, and, if promising, could be kept and passed on from monastery to monastery till he became a pope, a cardinal, a bishop, or till he was fit to act as a minister of State or to become a great artist.' The famous kind-hearted Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, came of very humble parents, so did one of the most noted Bishops of Durham, and many others.

There is a tradition (I do love these ancient tradi-

tions, they have such a genuine old-world flavour, they are so charmingly opposed to our present matter-of-fact prove-everything-by-science age) that the poor cloth-worker's wife dreamt three successive nights a wonderful dream, to the effect that if she ate within the next three days a whole pike, she would have a son who would become famous and take proud position amongst the noblest of the land. Full of this prophetic dream, she tried to purchase one of these fish in the town, but there was not one to be had. Disappointed and dispirited, she returned home, and dipping her bucket as usual into the river to procure the requisite water for household purposes, to her joy and surprise she discovered a young pike in it: this she took, cooked and ate, and in due course the boy was born, and became in time my Lord the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Out of Guildford our road began steadily to mount, and it mounted till we reached the top of that curious ridge of chalk down known by the name of the Hog's Back, a long stretch of level land elevated considerably over the surrounding country. We seemed as though we were on the top of everything; there was only the solemn sky above us, a sleeping world below. Strangely silent was our way; no songs of birds enlivened us, the winds were still, the leaves quivered not in the motionless air, only the monotonous clatter clatter of our horses' hoofs and the crunching of the phaeton wheels broke the almost unnatural quietude. It is well at times to be thus alone and at peace; you feel then what a hurry and ceaseless turmoil life is; how full of untold longings and feverish unrest, what a never-ending struggle for the unattainable is human existence!

On either side of us extended a wide level world, a sea of cool green meadows and red-soiled fields, mapped out by roads and intersected by hedgerows, looking like some gigantic chessboard, with tall trees doing duty for chessmen. Over all these our eyes dreamily wandered till the fields grew smaller and smaller by degrees and were lost finally in a misty obscurity of blended forms, and we could trace them no longer. And as our eyes wandered, so did our thoughts —far, far away. Something or another in the landscape —the gleam of water, a grey church tower, a clump of trees, called up by some half-forgotten association, recollections of bygone days, memories pleasant or sad. It is strange how a simple sight or sound should so often and curiously affect us.

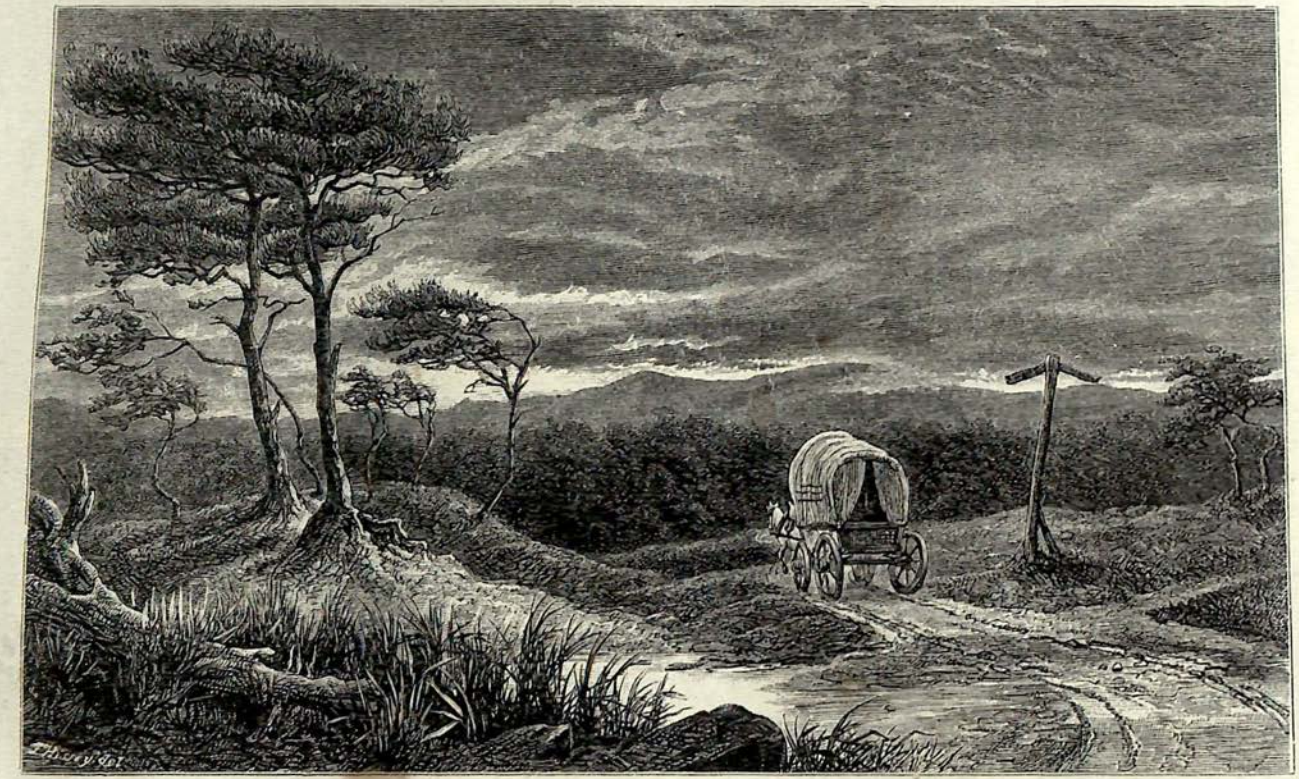
The air was clear, luminous, and pure; high up as we were, we found it both exhilarating and cool, even on that warm summer noon. The space-softened distance was a transparent blue; the horizon looked as though it had been washed over with a tint of the purest ultramarine. One thing about Surrey and Sussex hills and distances has always struck me, namely their blueness, a real positive blue under certain conditions of the atmosphere. I have sometimes, though rarely, observed this colour in England elsewhere; but it is by no means uncommon in the above-named counties, as anyone who has sketched much in them from nature must know. The reason of this peculiarity I cannot say, I only know the fact: possibly it may be in the soil, or have something to do with the clearness or condition of the atmosphere. Hampshire and Dorset, on the other hand, have more of a purple distance, Yorkshire and the northern

counties a grey, Devonshire and Cornwall a wonderful blending of many soft tints, and so different portions of England each possess their own characteristic colouring. This circumstance may not be readily observable by the casual traveller, but to the artist it is very noticeable.

So clear and unobstructed all around was our view that it somehow gave us an impression of unreality, a feeling as though we were standing in the middle of one of those painted panoramas that were so popular of old, and have of late been revived with some success, and that it was a painted world that we looked upon.

The day was growing old, the sun was sinking slowly to his rest in the amber west, causing lengthening shadows across our way, and the landscape grew also vague and ghost-like ; a soft grey gloom was creeping over the prospect, blotting out all detail. Coming to the end of our elevated road with brake hard on, we hurried down to the valley below in order to reach Farnham before the darkness should overtake us. The air grew warmer as we descended—we were soon in quite a different climate. What changes in this respect one finds in even a day's drive in this little England of ours, small in size but great in almost every other way, limited in extent but inexhaustible in a scenic point of view.

In driving across England, nothing impresses me more than its wonderful variety of landscape. Great Britain possesses the unique quality of infinite variety in a small compass. Other lands may have as varied landscapes, but as far as I have ever observed, they differ from our island in this one important particular, that the beauty spots are separated by spaces of weary-



A BIT OF WILD HAMPSHIRE.

ing sameness. Not so in England: with us the mountainous portions are not so great as to become monotonous, nor are the plains too extensive; our lakes are no parodies on inland seas, and their small size (which causes them to be picturesquely perfect, by the way) permits of a number in a limited area. The moors are broken up by lovely valleys, and the downs and wolds do not cover such an extent of ground as to tire the wanderer thereon; he can always within a reasonable distance procure a complete change of scene should he so wish. Well within a day's walk or easy drive of these may be found pleasant dales with cultivated fields and rich green pastures very refreshing to the eye after the barren uplands. Contrasts such as these help greatly to enhance the beauties of both classes of scenery, and such comparisons are continually afforded to the traveller by road in England. Moreover, being a small island we have the great advantage of never being far from the sea, with its ozone-laden breezes, its ever-varying interests and incidents, its changing coasts, now grand and romantically rugged as in Cornwall, Wales, and the North generally, and again peaceful and bright with chalk cliffs and smooth sandy shores as in the South. If, therefore, at any time we have a longing for mere vastness, we have the limitless ocean ever at our command.

Arriving at Farnham, we drove up to the Bush Hotel, a large modern-looking building as seen from the street; but we quickly discovered this unpromising structure only hid the cosy old inn of former days, which lay at the back with a pleasant garden attached to it. Here we were made exceedingly comfortable, and we wished long prosperity to the Bush. Truly,

wishes like kind words cost nothing, but we meant what we felt; good wishes and good words are, however, always acceptable. We Englishmen grumble loud and long enough when we consider ourselves not well served or at all imposed upon; we write to the papers, and certainly do not hide our grievances under a bushel. I think, on the other hand, it is only fair to acknowledge when we are well treated. As a rule, with only one or two very rare exceptions, during the whole of our driving tours, extending now for many years, and many many miles, over a very considerable portion of Great Britain, we have met with nothing but civility, and everywhere we have noticed an anxiety to please and to do the best for us. Our quarters have varied; some have been very rough, rougher indeed than we cared for, and being old road travellers we do not consider ourselves over-hard to please; but our welcome has not so varied; in fact, the humbler our inn the more anxious everyone appeared that we should be comfortable. It seems to me a traveller in a great measure makes his own welcome, or the reverse. Some people are never satisfied; they grumble without reason, instead of being pleased when the best is done for them, often appearing most unreasonably to expect the conveniences of club-land or of their own homes in remote country inns; indeed, I have sometimes wondered to myself whether such individuals would not discover something to find fault with even in Paradise—providing, of course, they ever get there. For ourselves we found pleasant words and ready smiles to do wonders: courtesy is an excellent coin to travel with; money of course you must have, but courtesy will often do what money cannot.

During the evening a bicyclist in a dark blue braided

uniform, looking much like an officer in a bespattered patrol jacket, came into the coffee-room of our hotel. He began at once attacking the waiter about the roads, who unfortunately referred him to us, knowing we had travelled a portion of the way he was inquiring about, and once having entered into conversation the said bicyclist stuck to us for a considerable portion of the evening. 'Had we wheeled it from London?' he asked. 'Yes,' we replied; we certainly had come on wheels. 'Did we come on a sociable or a tandem, had we a good brake, what kind was it, who was the maker of our machine?' These questions came in a volley. We told him the name of the builder of our phaeton, giving, as requested, his address in London. 'Well, he had never heard of him; his bicycle was made in Coventry—all the best ones were.' Then followed another volley of queries. 'What sort of lamps and bells had we, how many miles did we do a day, had we ball-bearings, what maps did we use, did we carry a cyclometer, how did we manage about our luggage?' and so forth in over-abundance. But fortunately we were not called upon to reply to all these, for our enthusiastic bicyclist gave us no time, but at once began to relate for our special benefit the best kind of lamps, bells, bearings, and so forth. It amused us much that he should never have guessed for a long time that anyone could travel by road and upon wheels, yet come by neither bicycle nor tricycle, but by simple driving.

After a time we rather wearied of talking about, or, to write more correctly, hearing of, the respective merits and demerits of certain machines, bells, lamps, bearings, treadles, tires, and all the sundry items that go to complete a bicycle. We ventured, therefore,

to ask him about the country he had passed through, and what the scenery was like. About this, however, he had little to say; in fact, he appeared to know nothing whatever of it. All that we could contrive to get out of him was that he had done sixty-five miles that day, that the road was very good at first, hilly afterwards, heavy-going next, then 'middling,' and, last of all, capital travelling. Luckily, after a time, another visitor asked him a question, and we at once retired from the conversation as gracefully as we could.

Bicycles, for those who can ride them and care to do so, are doubtless excellent machines to get across country with; the traveller on one is more independent in some respects than either with a horse or carriage, but it depends upon the rider whether he uses his opportunities to advantage, or merely covers so much ground each day; if the latter is his desire, save for the exercise, he might as well, or better, go by railway, the risk of an accident would be less.

There is one excuse to be made on behalf of the bicyclist: of necessity much attention has to be given to the machine, or a very probable 'spill' might be the result of neglect in this respect. Therefore, when it is a question of an upset or seeing the scenery, naturally enough the scenery goes to the wall.

CHAPTER IV.

In a Hop Country—Hops *versus* Vines—The Romance of the Unknown—A Botanical Puzzle—An Age of Marvels—Philosophers and Facts—Lovable Scenery—An American's Opinion of English Hedges—A highly prized Flower—Alton—A Stormy Sunset—The Scenery of Cloudland—An old Coaching Bill—Relic Bargaining—The Country after Rain—A Pleasant Land—Man's Handiwork in Nature—An old Milestone.

We were now in a hop country, a pleasant land to wander through when the hops are ripening—pleasanter, it seems to me, than the vine-clad hills of the Continent. Poetry and song, romance and prose, have all united to do homage to the foreign vine; but what is the vine to the wreathing hop with its golden clustering fruits dangling and dancing in the breeze? The latter is surely beyond comparison the most beautiful. I, at least, can never see the fabled loveliness of the short-staked, regular, monotonous vineyards. Wherein lies their special charm? Surely it exists more in poetic imagination than stern reality? But then the vineyards are abroad, the hop lands at home, and that makes all the difference to the average Briton, who appears to imagine that all good things in a scenic sense must be sought for beyond the sea.

In the old days of limited travel, when few there were who saw the reality (the majority staying contentedly at home), romance and fable had free play, and

the picturesqueness of mystery, added to the praises sung in virtue of the vine, lent a sort of halo of enchantment to the invisible. Now in this steam-travelling age distant lands are to most Englishmen better known than their own, and have in consequence ceased to be wonderful. No longer now exist—save in artist's conceptions or poet's dreams—golden cities in the East, or El Dorados in the vague far-off West. Steam has ruined romance. When all was unknown, all was possible; now all is familiar by observation or photographs—for, unlike a painter, these latter cannot create wonderlands—Fancy can no more hold her sway. We have to journey by telescope to distant worlds now for our wonders; and truly the sight of the sunrise upon one of the lunar craters is a more superb prospect than the most glorious dreamed-of unreality of the age of mystery.

The mind wanders whither it will; who can restrain it? Often whilst tramping along the busy, dusty, confined streets of London, have I in spirit been miles upon miles away, amongst the lone bleak moorlands or wild cloud-loving hills, and it is a good thing sometimes to be able to travel thus—to rid oneself, if only for a few moments, of one's dull, prosaic, unbeautiful surroundings.

But to return from moorland to earth once more, and to ourselves in particular, and to the minor subject from which we have so far wandered. There is one strange fact about the hop: as long as hops have grown, they have twined, without exception, round the pole, following the course of the sun, from east to west; on the other hand, the wild convolvulus and sundry plants of a similar character twist in exactly the opposite

direction, each for ever maintaining its own idea of how to climb. Who can give us the reason of this? We live in an age of marvels, we have girdled the earth with electricity, the iron horse whose breath is fire has annihilated distance for us, steam is our slave and servant, we have conquered space and time; but all the science of our day cannot explain the many strange wonders of growth in an everyday hedgerow! Truly the evolution of man is child's play to science; that man should be developed from a sponge or a crab is a simple thing, a natural progressive cause, notwithstanding in these degenerate days sponges infallibly come from sponges, and crabs beget crabs; but still, for all its cleverness, will science tell us why trees are green, explain how the grass grows? Trifles these, too small possibly for the mighty philosophers to consider—who, given force and matter, can explain the existence of worlds, order, and even life! I would bind science down by its own dogmas, and accept nothing without positive irrefutable proof, and we ought not to be asked to accept anything otherwise; the so-called facts of to-day are not always those of to-morrow; and when scientific men begin to theorise upon plausible possibilities, I for one will refuse to follow. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link: one unthought-of trifle, one false reasoning or wrong guess (and science is not always above guessing when direct proofs are not to be had), and a whole theory-raised fabric falls to the ground. I have no quarrel with science, but in some things, it appears to me, it would prove too much, and know the unknowable, fathom the unfathomable.

I think, if I remember aright, it was Professor Huxley who said, in a lecture at Belfast, that possibly

the first germ of life might have been conveyed to this earth in a meteoric stone. Surely the conjectures of science are stranger far than facts! How then, might we ask—granting what appears to me a ridiculous absurdity—came life into that stone or other world from whence it came? How?

But enough of these wandering thoughts. The road from Farnham to Alton was a pretty one, bordered by pleasant hedgerows, green pastures, and shady trees musical with the songs of birds. An enjoyable, thoroughly English-looking country it was. There is nothing especially wonderful about such scenery, but it is eminently lovable; it has a homelike mellow beauty that possesses a peculiar charm for me; there is a look of restfulness and repose about it that is very soothing; it has a familiar friendly look that wins your affection whether you will or no. It is not always the grandest scenery that pleases the most. Does not Byron—lover of the sublime and the magnificent though he was—say:

> A green field is a sight which makes us pardon
> The absence of that more sublime construction
> Which mixes up vines, olives, precipices,
> Glaciers, volcanoes, oranges, and ices?

But the green fields without their homely hedgerows would lose half their charms; each is dependent on the other for the blended beauty of our land. An American lady I was once driving with truly remarked to me, 'England would not be England without its too little appreciated hedges; I have grown to love them as I have never before loved anything in inanimate nature; they make her what she is, the most lovely

country upon earth; they give her a distinctive character; your ordinary little-esteemed hedgerows are things of great beauty to me.' Yes, truly, a wild, uncultivated, entangled hedge, the home of all kinds of plants and wild shrubs, the favourite resort of countless birds, is a thing of beauty though so commonplace. There the bramble flourishes, the schoolboy's delight, the perfumed honeysuckle, the delicate dog-rose, the gay odorous may, the red-berried bryony, the twining convolvulus, the dark green clematis or traveller's joy, the bitter-sweet with its drooping blossoms of yellow and purple, the sweetbriar and countless other creepers, plants, and flowers, a list of which, so abundant are they, it would weary me to write and you to peruse, kind reader. How wonderful are the number and the variety of these, friends all of them from my boyhood, dear and fondly loved for old associations' sake. No skilled art of man, no studied work of highly paid gardener, could ever produce anything so pleasingly picturesque, so charmingly delightful in its disorderly irregularity, such a combination of careless form, such a quiet harmony of colour, such graceful twining and festooning, such careless and unsought beauty, as exists in an ordinary everyday English hedgerow.

Often when travelling on the Continent, and still more frequently in America (even in the older States, when my surroundings reminded me most of England), have I wondered to myself what it was that was wanting in the scene to complete the likeness, for that there was a something wanting I both felt and knew. Surely it must be a something I could not comprehend. It was some time before I learnt it was the absence of our familiar hedges. And in America, above all, I

missed the little lowly unheeded daisy: a meadow without the child-loved daisies and buttercups is no meadow to me. Poor tiny unassuming flower; thou lowly, humble, homely daisy, one of the meekest offsprings of earth—modest 'wee crimson-tipped' thing, rooted up as of no worth in our grand gardens, despised as a troublesome weed—I have seen thee fondly treasured and tenderly cared for by fairy hands in a far distant land beyond the broad Atlantic, where thou wert growing wearily and sadly, homesick for thy birthland. How I pitied you; how sweetly your familiar face looked up to me, pining away, yet valued beyond all the rare, showy, and costly flowers therein, as a memento of the dear old Home! Oh, the beauty of the unconsidered things around us!

Were I asked to name the most lovely flower we have, it would not be amongst our boasted garden ones I should take my choice, rich in blossoms, rare in colours, and sweet with perfumes though they may be; I would say, if needs be, take all these away, but, oh, leave me the simple child's love, the innocent white-starred daisy that dots our fields all over, even as the stars dot the deep blue vault of heaven above!

As we drove into Alton, where we intended to make our midday halt, spots of rain began to fall, and we had hardly got safely under the shelter of our inn before down the storm came in right earnest. Pit, pit, pit, dashed the wind-driven drops against our window panes, which rattled in their casements with every gust. It was a strange sudden change from the cheerful bright sunshine to the grey gloom, broken only by the slanting lines of light; fortunately we were under shelter, for had we been in the open we should have had a regular drench-

ing. We soon found watching the steady downpour a poor amusement; the sky was all over of a dull leaden hue, across which low-lying clouds were travelling, drooping and bulging with suspended vapour. An inspection of the barometer did not improve matters, that useful but disappointing instrument pointed to 'rain;' and when we tapped it, it quietly and most provokingly fell to 'much rain,' in spite of our hopes that it would do the very reverse. So feeling that there was no help for it, we ordered our belongings to be got down from the phaeton and brought indoors, and arranged to spend the night beneath the sign of the Swan.

No sooner had we made all our preparations, than a suspicion of yellow light, more felt than observed, caused us to look out, and surely enough the clouds had parted, and the low noonday sun was shining, a glowing ball of orange, like a prisoner, behind long bars of purple clouds, reflecting his warm glory over all the dun-coloured vapours, transforming into wondrous varying tints of ruby and gold all he looked upon. However, as we had already made our arrangements, we did not then feel inclined to change our plans with the changing weather, so we did the only other thing left to us, and improved the occasion by strolling out and taking a survey of the place.

There is nothing much to see in Alton, or at least, if there is, we failed to discover it. None the less the quiet old town pleased us much, it was so unlike *the* great city we were so accustomed to. Perhaps the only thing of interest a guide-book writer could extract out of the place is the old church doors, which bear evident signs of the brunts and bruises of war, being

marked and dented by the bullets of the Parliamentary forces, which besieged here Colonel Bowles with his little troop of Royalists, they (the Cavaliers) having retreated to the church upon the capture of the town, and gallantly held out till their leader was killed.

But, truth to tell, during our wanderings we paid more attention to the gorgeous stormy sunset sky than to any sublunary matters or scenes. How Turner, could he have seen it, would have gloried in it! But even his magic brush must inevitably have failed to realise what no painter's palette, however varied or rich, could ever give. Man cannot do the impossible; the greatest genius has his limits; earthly pigments cannot give us crimson and golden fire. And here words are superior to the finest productions of man on canvas or paper; for words can suggest fire to the mind with all its glowing intensity. Paint at the best is only paint; white, our brightest white, is but a dull grey to Nature's highest lights, seeming duller even than it really is because we cannot secure to contrast with it Nature's depths of darkness. White, or yellow, or red, they are but shades to the living reality.

The day of cloud and storm had ended; the round red sun was sinking slowly down behind a mountain chain of purple vapour-land; a continent rather, with promontories, capes, and bays all fringed with a burning edge of lustrous gold. The island clouds above were all aglow with ruby and orange; colours melting and dissolving into a mystery of many countless tints shaded with matchless hues of pearly grey. Trails of travelling light went throbbing over the whole sky; long-drawn streaks of flame, held suspended in the moist-laden reflecting air, flooded the sky above

with a radiance, a splendour, and a glory beyond even the wildest dreams of fairyland. Carmine, orange, and amethyst, green and gold and purple, commingling and vibrating, blending and contrasting, and mixed with these a waving undulating vision of opal loveliness; hues fading and renewing, tints changing every moment, till the sun, the giver of all this splendour, sinking lower still and lower, disappeared from sight. Slowly then and surely the cool silvery blue of evening took the place of the countless sunset colours, only one lingering fire-flushed cloudlet remained in that world of growing grey to tell of its former glory, one remnant of a past beauty, of a never-to-be-forgotten hour, of a wonderland above, never to be seen again, for Nature repeats not such things. No two skies are ever quite the same; since the world began until now, morning, noon, and night, they have unceasingly varied. Then at last this one lone lingering gleam of colour vanished, and the deepening twilight grew imperceptibly into night. Then earth and sky were colourless, the cold crescent moon shyly showed herself between the broken masses of vapour, pale and wan in the cheerless sky. The beauty of the day was over, that short hour of untold loveliness was no more, only in imagination could we realise what had been.

It is astonishing how few people pay any attention to the endless beauties of the sky, and yet its varying charms are free to all. Nothing in the world is more full of change—and is this not a change-loving age?—nothing so abounding in movement, save perhaps the unquiet sea; no two clouds are ever exactly alike, either in form or colour. I know nothing more interesting than to observe the ever-altering masses of

vapour, the different classes of clouds being characteristic of the various kinds of weather. There is a wonderful fascination to me in watching these; on a fine summer day for a time they appear at perfect rest, rosy-hued and of the tenderest tones; then as you gaze some melt away in the warm sunshine, whilst others are born in their place. Whence come they, and whither do they go? Some vanish into space, others twist and coil with one another, combining together into strange forms, out of which the imagination can conjure pictures at will. Again they twine themselves into a mazy mystery, a masterpiece of confusion, with stray peeps between of the steadfast blue beyond—the one all movement and restlessness, the other a serene tranquillity. What a wealth of combinations, harmonies, and contrasts do they not afford—form and formlessness, the limitable and the illimitable, full of energy, warlike in the thunderstorm, yet, the tempest over, abounding in peace, restlessness ending in repose, motion sinking into rest, rest again changing into movement. Watch but for one hour the wandering clouds upon a summer morning drifting carelessly above you, across the clear infinity of blue—you might spend an idle hour worse. Observe them kindling and vanishing, wreathing and intertwining, now wind-woven into all manner of capricious shapes, revelling in the rosy sunlight, tinged with the palest gold and shaded with hues as delicate as those of a pearl. How joyous they seem in their fetterless freedom, how space-expressing in their indefiniteness! This is the sky at peace. The glory and the majesty, the grandeur and the sublimity, the power and oppressive energy of the dread fire-charged thunderstorm, foreboding in its overpowering gloom, as it sweeps

irresistibly over the darkening earth, its sulphurous breathings, its crashing, deafening voices, its blinding, death-dealing fiery flashes, are beyond any words of mine to describe. This is the sky at war; a battle of the elements, telling of their might and of the littleness of man. Surely in all God's creation there is nothing more wonderful, more lovely, more peace-bestowing, or more majestic and more dreadful in its wrath than the immensity of cloud and sky above.

In the entrance of our hotel we noticed hung up against the wall an old coaching bill of some hundred years ago, giving the fares, times, and particulars of the journey to and from London. This antique document being of more than usual interest, I carefully copied it—'machine,' horses, coachman, guard, and all—and a curious drawing it was. Unfortunately I afterwards mislaid my notes, and thereupon wrote to the landlord, asking him if he would be kind enough to send me another copy (of the wording only, of course). To which request I received a letter in reply, a portion of which I quote as follows: 'I am very sorry to say I cannot comply with your request, for I thoughtlessly sold my old sign-board (*sic*) last year to a gentleman who was passing through here in a four-in-hand drag, and who took such a fancy to it that he never left me alone till he got it.'

It is a pity such relics of the past should be thus bought up, instead of being allowed to remain in their proper homes, where they would be of interest to all, instead of possibly being hidden away in some town smoke room, visible only to a select few, and little heeded when familiarity has taken the place of novelty. Upon one occasion, in the North, we had

offered to us a fine old oak mantel, dark-toned with age, quaintly carved and curious, belonging to an ancient venerable weather-tinted manor house, with the date '1573' thereon. The price asked for it was certainly high, but then genuine antique mantels of that period, in fair preservation, are not as plentiful as the precious productions of Wardour Street, where the supply only seems to be limited by the demand. Indeed, very possibly the impudent black-stained imitations are made of woods that had not begun to grow, or at best were only saplings, when this mantel was constructed. We resisted the temptation to make even an offer for it: this on principle, as we felt it would amount almost to a sacrilege to remove such an interesting specimen of old-time work from its proper home and befitting surroundings.

How some people can find the heart to part with these relics, I can never understand; but I have often observed that they do so, tempted, I suppose, by the high prices offered. True, in this case the modern proprietor was not descended from the original owners, nor had he any connection with the family, so he had not to contend with the charms of old associations linking the present with the past.

It is rueful that such ancient mansions, often full of archæological interest, fraught with the sentiment of antiquity, hallowed by bygone memories, frequently having some curious legends attached to them, not seldom reputed to be haunted, hoary with the age of centuries, should in so many cases have fallen into such a low estate; the generation who first raised them dead and gone long years ago, with nothing remaining but possibly some mouldering crumbling monuments

in the humble village fane to tell us who they were, their descendants perchance impoverished, far away in foreign lands, or the race maybe no more! The old homes have been sold, and have passed from hand to hand, often turned into farmhouses, or even converted into a number of cottages. So the glories of the world fade away—the one-time mansions of worthy knights and valiant warriors divided into tenements, and doing duty as lowly abodes for the humblest tillers of the soil! And even when they have been tolerably preserved, they as often as not fall into the hands of those who have no appreciation for the treasures in the shape of oak and other carvings which, if not already sold or improved (save the mark!) away, they still possess. A quaint porch, a doorway, or it may be an antique staircase, carved with curious figures and abounding in strange conceits, will delight the eye of a chance visitor, showing as they do such evident signs of enjoyed handicraft, and a love of work for work's sake, so utterly different and opposed to the mechanical machine-made-by-the-million mouldings of the present day, with all their wearying repetitions of similar forms.

How lovely the country appears after a storm! How clear and deep and pure is the blue of the wind-swept, rain-washed sky! There are no impurities or haze in the atmosphere then, the dome above is an intense ultramarine. How fresh the landscape looks too; how near and sharply cut the distance seems; how revived and reviving the glorious unfading greens of the grasses and the trees after the refreshing moisture! How the colours of everything are brought out; how sweet is the breath of the air; how right merrily the birds

sing as the sun shines forth again! Such a morning was the one on which we left Alton.

Our road that day led us through a very pleasant country, one of sweet repose and full of rural delights, abounding moreover in agreeable scenic surprises. A land of rich pastures, of gently gliding streams and placid rivers, of ancient woods and grand old halls proudly standing in their timbered parks, and sunny red-bricked farmsteads that made us envy the farmer's lot.

Ever and anon as we proceeded along a succession of ready-made pictures was revealed to us, rare gems of rural scenery, perfect each in themselves, and that would appear to be specially reserved to reward the sojourner by road, be he a simple pedestrian, or, like ourselves, bound upon a pilgrimage on wheels. Such beauty spots seem ever to be praying for some one to come and paint them; they compel you to rest and admire them. How often we rested that day! The temptation to loiter about and explore is too great to be resisted; you cannot pass by such picturesque nooks unheeded.

It was a soft, home-like, happy-looking land with pleasant prospects everywhere, and, as we drove along, peeps of panoramic loveliness now and again opened up before us, vistas of sunny greenery broken by chequered shadows here and there, leading our eyes from shade to sunshine, and from sunshine to shade again, over fields and woods, past sleeping hamlet and gleam of stilly water, till, wandering away from mystery to mystery, the landscape gradually imperceptibly melted into the hazy blue nothingness of the space-subdued distance! A land it was suggestive of peace



A WAYSIDE WINDMILL.

and plenty, of quiet prosperity and home contentment, one more like a poet's ideal than a portion of our every-day world—a land one sometimes sees in dreams, seldom in reality, witchingly beautiful yet not too lovely to be true, charming the eye and speaking to the heart of the fortunate traveller therein. Eminently a pretty country, but pretty without pettiness, one suggestive of human occupancy, with its far-spreading meadows and gentle undulating well-tilled fields, its farms and villages, and grey time-hallowed churches peeping here and there from out of a wealth of foliage.

'God made the country, but man made the town,' says the poet, and the statement is generally accepted as an indisputable fact, without a thought but that the saying must be correct. Correct to some extent certainly it is, but not wholly true by any means. In England, at any rate, man has done much to make the country what it is. He has drained and cultivated the land, has studded it with parks and buildings, has crossed it with roads and footpaths, has shrouded the trees, has caused the hedges to exist, and generally given to it a humanising look. Very different is all this nature utilised and tamed, from nature in its wild state, not less beautiful perhaps, but still different. Scarcely then, as far as England is concerned, saving the moor-lands, which seem beyond his power to subdue, can it be considered that man has had nothing to do with the making of the country. But, however he may have altered the land, and in spite of what he may do in the future, the sky above with its glorious cloud-scapes, and the everlasting sea below, will ever remain unchanged and unchangeable.

Different classes of scenery appeal differently to

various people, and these again are influenced by changing moods. Grand gloomy mountains, with their grim precipices, roaring torrents, sparkling falls and lonely rock-bound tarns, powerfully impress some; others love more sylvan scenes, and delight rather to wander knee-deep in bracken, through some far-stretching forest solitude, or to tramp over hills all heather-clad and pine-girt; others, again, would take their pleasure sailing or paddling on some placid hill-encircled lake; slowly gliding rivers—such as our own familiar Thames—have their special admirers; still others prefer the profound melancholy of the far-extending moorlands, impressive in their utter untameable desolateness. And besides, there are many who care for none of these. There are those who long for something more companionable: a homelike country, full of human associations, more appeals to their sympathies; a peaceful reposeful pastoral land, such as we passed through that day, has the strongest hold upon their affections, affording to them a special delight such as no other prospect, however sublime or beautiful, could.

Our road that day, though full of quiet charms and ever-changing views, was not one readily to be described. Not always scenery that is the most readily depicted is the most beautiful or most to be beloved; there is a special charm about an unpretending landscape, like the innocent smile of a simple maiden, that beggars all words to define. Such a landscape seems to possess as it were a heart, it appears to sympathise with your every thought. It is not too grand or too distant to repel you; it has a maternal look: lying down on a mossy grassy slope of such, you feel you are then resting on the kindly bosom of mother earth—your

mother, the mother of all her children, kindly, tender, companionable, and true. Whatever your mood, be you sad or gay, she condoles or rejoices with you. The music of the wind-stirred trees, the subdued rustling of the grasses (only for those who are old friends of nature), the rhythmic cadences of falling water, the bleating of distant sheep, the twittering of countless birds, the manifold murmurings of many things from all around, are very soothing and tranquillising to listen to.

Pulling up by the roadside upon a pleasant stretch of sward—the land here was not tilled to the last square yard—under the grateful shelter of some overhanging trees, we rested for a time, gathering wild flowers, and not forgetting the horses, whom we treated to several handfuls of freshly plucked grass, much to their satisfaction. Here we noticed an old battered and moss-begrown milestone, the inscription upon it almost indecipherable now. This informed us that we were some fifty odd miles from London. Nettles and burdocks had grown around its base, its face was crumbled, stained, and weather-worn. How neglected it looked! no one ever seems to heed or need it now. Since the days of railways, who requires to learn the distances in these parts? (The local mileages are all well known.)

Only fifty miles from London! and yet to us it seemed so far, far away, so long in time since we had left behind that busy million-peopled city. Could it be true, only fifty miles away? What had we not seen in those miles! how many green fields, wild spreading heaths, swelling downs, old-world villages; how many ancient time-grey churches, tree-bordered lanes, quiet rustic homes, and flower-tinted meadows, had we not

passed! Surely fifty miles by road is a very different thing from a smooth two hours' journey by rail.

There is one thing about an expedition such as ours. Though we only did some twenty miles a day we saw so much *en route*, and combined with the length of time taken on the stage so many varying experiences and excursions on foot, that upon reaching our destination in the evening, we could hardly realise we had traversed so comparatively short a distance. It seemed to us indeed as though the place we had left in the morning was miles upon miles away. We had in fact really seen more of England during our day's progress than had we journeyed from London to Edinburgh by train, and consequently, though short our stage, we felt in truth that we had travelled much.

CHAPTER V.

Alresford—An Enigma—A Country Town—Sightseeing—A Road Monster—The Choice of an Inn—Winchester—A Warning for Tourists—The Picturesque at Home and Abroad—Relics—Kingly Meanness—A Verger's Story—An Ancient Dole—A Thunder-storm—Difficult Driving—Southampton—Nature as a Painter—English Forests—Highways and Country Lanes—An Enchanted Land—The Truth about Rufus's Death—Lyndhurst—A Spot for Honeymooners.

CONTINUING our pleasant way, we presently reached Alresford, a sunny little town. Here we baited at an old-fashioned inn, which still appears to flourish, though where its business and customers come from is a problem. Indeed, it was always a standing enigma to us how so many of the rural hostelries existed at all, as in these days of railways a genuine traveller by road is almost as scarce a being as the dodo.

Alresford struck us, as so many of our little country towns do, as being a cheerful place. What especially makes these small towns so bright-looking compared to London, was for a time a puzzle to us; for in spite of its sombre smoke-stained buildings, there are still summer days in town when the sun shines clearly, and the streets should appear somewhat more cheerful than they do. Searching for the reason of this, we came to the conclusion that the general lowness of the houses of our rural towns, and the absence

of extended stretches of high uniform buildings blotting out the sun's rays, has a great deal to do with their brightness.

The country town has the benefit of whatever sunshine there is. Where space is so valuable as it is in our large cities, buildings grow skyward as the land grows in price, and however good (when of merit) the architecture of these may be, we cannot get far enough from it to properly appreciate or fully understand it: moreover, the sunlight—being blocked out by the elevated buildings on the opposite side of the way—is wanting to help their decorative details with the effects of light and shade. For æsthetic purposes the height of buildings should be in proportion to the breadth of the street. Light and air are both artistic and sanitary necessities.

Chatting with the good-natured ostler, as is our wont, when we find that useful individual of a communicative disposition, he informed us that we were but a short distance from Tichborne House, made famous by the notorious trial. 'Of course,' he said, 'you will drive round and see the place; it will not take you far out of your way, and then you can say you have seen it; everybody does.' But to his surprise we said we would make the exception to everybody, as we felt no particular desire to see the house, even for the sake of saying so. It is a strange idea this of visiting places, not from any real interest or pleasure they may afford us, but simply for the sake of saying we have been to them. I believe our trans-Atlantic cousins have a great failing in this respect. They often, I am told, before coming to Europe, with the aid of friends who have been before, make out a list of

places that must 'be done,' and set hard to work 'to do' them, as a matter of duty. One of our good neighbours from across 'the Herring Pond' informed me upon one occasion, he had actually devoted a whole day to the inspection of Edinburgh! Hard work surely, this sightseeing at express speed, a peculiar outcome of our age of steam, without which it would be an impossibility—an endless rushing about, a restless morbid desire to put three days' work into one—a hurried glancing at many things, a comprehending of none. A painful unsatisfactory way of holiday making, turning what should be a restful pleasure into a needless toil, and in no way tending to that lessening of the strain upon the nervous system of which it stands so much in want during these high-pressure times.

It is reported of Sheridan, that upon his son once telling him 'he had a great desire to go down a coal mine, in order that he might say he had done so,' he replied, 'If that is all, why don't you say so at once?' Wisdom, if not morality, in a nutshell.

Leaving Alresford, we proceeded towards Winchester. Finding by our map that there was a country byroad we could take without making much of a detour, we concluded to venture on it, deeming the chances greatly in favour of the cross-road being both more picturesque and more interesting than the highway, and we had no reason to regret our choice. The road was a narrow one, however, as such tracks mostly are. We had not driven far along it when at a bend ahead we observed a suspicious cloud of black smoke, and at the same time a hoarse puff, puff, puff, greeted our ears; only too well we knew, from sad experience, what was coming. Presently a huge iron monster, a traction

engine to wit, made its unwelcome appearance. What uncouth dangerous monsters these are, the abomination of our age, the perfection of mechanical ugliness, dangerous and menacing to spirited horses, the terror of nervous equestrians and lady riders; it is a shame such things should be allowed to travel upon such narrow country lanes. We sounded our horn, and the monster after another laboured puff or two noisily came to a standstill half in the ditch, but even then we doubted much if there would be room enough for us to pass. Not only was there one engine, we discovered on driving up, but two, and not two engines merely, but they were dragging behind them a combination of caravans on wheels and tortured masses of iron in the shape of cultivators, steam ploughs, or some such hideous inventions. Truly a strange company to meet with in a peaceful rural lane—not so strange now-a-days, though, as a few years ago. Times are progressing! Passing these fiery, fuming, sulphur-smelling, evil-looking monsters safely, though not without a good deal of shying and prancing of our frightened steeds, we continued on our way, thankful to have got by without any mishap.

Winchester was duly reached in the cool of the evening. Upon arriving there we made a tour of inspection round the town—hotel-hunting—for we have found it wisdom not to always patronise the first inn we come to (unless indeed it should appear very desirable) when a further search might secure us quarters more to our liking. Nor have we found it answer, as a rule, to listen to the recommendations of strangers in this matter: we have often had to regret so doing. Therefore with the usual pigheadedness of John Bull we take

our own way and choice, and seldom have we suffered by acting so. Besides, driving round about a fresh town gave us something of an idea of what it was like, and enabled us with better advantage to continue our wanderings therein afoot, our general programme after we had duly selected an inn, and seen our steeds comfortably stabled, for we never forgot nor neglected the horses who gave us so much pleasure.

Anent the matter of recommending hotels, in driving across Yorkshire upon one occasion a rather amusing incident occurred to us. We chanced to meet at the inn where we were making our midday halt, a party also baiting there with a gig, and in the course of conversation with him inquired about the hotels in the next town. He appeared to take quite an interest in our query, and was most enthusiastic in his recommendation of the White Horse, which was, he stated, 'by far and away the best and most comfortable inn in the place, indeed there was not a better one in all broad Yorkshire'! Now Yorkshire is a large county, and contains some most excellent hotels, where they know thoroughly how to treat a weary traveller and make him at home, so the praise was high, considering especially that the town was a somewhat unimportant one. Noting that the individual in question seemed both well known to and on good terms with the ostler, after his departure we inquired of that worthy who he might be. 'Oh,' was the reply, 'that's the landlord of the White Horse, in the next town on your road.' 'Good inn?' said we. 'Middling,' replied the honest ostler; 'but the landlord's one of the right sort. Maybe, however, you'd be more comfortable at the Mitre, the gentry mostly puts up there.' We took

the well-intentioned hint. Indeed, the White Horse turned out to be quite a second-rate hostel.

Although in the heart of the city, our hotel at Winchester had a small garden attached to it: this feature is always to us a great recommendation to an inn, as, being out so much in the open air, we found it far pleasanter to be able to moon about out-of-doors when the day's rovings were over, than to be cooped up inside a possibly stuffy room.

In the evening we wandered round about the ancient city, and along its curious winding river-encircled suburbs, and were much pleased by discovering many quaint nooks and odd corners, all more or less picturesque and delightfully romantic, at least so they seemed in the quiet dreamy gloaming. If only some of these odd nooks and corners, some of these old rambling streets with their buildings of old-world flavour, were abroad, doubtless English artists would eagerly search them out, and glory in painting them, but unfortunately, being in England merely, they pay no heed to them. What is commonplace at home, is beautiful when far away; what is wanting in colour, form, and composition here, possesses all these qualities when elsewhere. Why and wherefore? Is such not the case? Go through any picture gallery, and see if it be not so. I do not deny the artistic merits of street scenes in other lands, I only say that there are bits here and there in our old towns equally effective and paintable, but how few seem to be aware of the fact or will acknowledge it! Speaking on the subject to an artist one day, one who always went abroad for such things, even to distant Algiers, I suggested to him certain particular town-scapes in England. Upon hunt-

ing these up, he afterwards candidly owned he had not before 'even the most remote idea there was anywhere such excellent stuff to be found at home.' Strange all this, strange but true, and stranger still it should be so.

Winchester is a very old city, one full to repletion of historic memories, and interesting as such places always are, more interesting than most perhaps; but as I am not writing a guide-book I must be excused naming all these. I may, however, mention—to show we were not unobservant travellers, nor failed to appreciate the wealth of stored-up treasures, relics, and traditions of this old old England of ours—that within the cathedral here rest, or are supposed to rest, the remains of Queen Boadicea, Alfred the Great, Egbert, Canute, St. Swithin, Rufus, and many other kings, bishops, and nobles, not to forget amongst a host of more modern worthies that dear old fisherman Izaak Walton. Unfortunately the bones of the ancient sovereigns, now contained in curious chests in the main body of the building, but formerly interred in the crypt, have been in times past 'very much mixed up' by the relic-hating Puritans, who appear to have had a merry-making here with them. So, 'as to which belongs to which,' as our intelligent verger remarked, it is impossible to say. And perhaps it does not matter so very much either to us or them, but this digging up first, and intermingling of different royal and saintly bones afterwards, is not altogether a nice idea; but then, the Puritans were not men of nice ideas; still, the dead might have been allowed to sleep their last long sleep undisturbed underground. After all, it would seem there are some advantages in not being

distinguished or famous; one's bones, after leaving this world, are not so likely to be disinterred or scattered about goodness knows whither; 'life's fitful fever o'er,' they have a fair chance of resting unmolested. And have not all of us at some time or another a sort of indefinable longing that what remains of our poor mortality should rest in sacred peace? Mortal still, but dear to us from old familiar faithful friendship!

Shortly after King Rufus (that despoiler of churches) was buried here, strangely enough the tower came down and utterly destroyed his tomb—'God's anger,' said the priests. Upon opening this some years ago, the remains of a gold-embroidered dress were found, also an iron-pointed arrowhead, or what is supposed to be such. Therefore it is just possible, provided it really was the said king's tomb, which many antiquaries dispute, that this was the very ancient historical weapon that caused his death; at any rate, there is a reasonable probability of its being genuine, which is more than can be said of such things generally. It would appear that the balance of evidence is in favour of this being the actual place of sepulture of the red king.

The chapter library is replete with relics and full of interest for antiquaries. Amongst other contents are the remains found in the tomb (or supposed tomb) of Rufus, and a rare gem in the shape of an exquisitely illuminated MS. of the Vulgate. This beautiful specimen of old-time work possesses a history worthy of record. It would appear that a certain monastery at Witham founded by Henry II. was, shortly after its establishment, greatly in want of books, and it coming to the knowledge of the king that the monks at Win-

chester had just completed a copy of the Bible, he sent for the prior and requested it of him. Though loth to part with that which had cost so much loving labour, the prior dared not refuse the king, who thereupon gave it to the newly started monastery. It chanced, however, not long afterwards, that the Prior of Witham met the Prior of Winchester; the latter, knowing nothing of the fate of the MS., was deploring its loss, and in the course of the conversation the head of the monastery at Witham acknowledged that the king had presented it to him, but at once, upon hearing how the book was missed and valued, generously offered to restore it, which he did, only stipulating that the king should never know the circumstance. A mean way of being generous, it struck us, this taking away from one party—by request—and presenting to some one else; hardly a kingly deed!

'As you are aware,' said the verger, 'St. Swithin is the patron saint of Winchester;' we were not until he told us so, but we did not betray our sad want of knowledge by any remark, and merely listened to the history which we knew from much experience of vergers was coming. And a long story it proved to be, but for the benefit of my readers I have endeavoured to condense it as follows. St. Swithin, it seems, wished his body to be buried in some spot 'where passers-by might tread on his grave, and where the dews and rains of heaven might fall upon it.' His desires were carried out. Unfortunately the monks were sadly in want of relics: competition in these articles was very severe, and unless a monastery was well supplied with them, it was apt to be outrivalled by other more relic-possessing religious houses. So, disregarding the saint's wishes, they deter-

mined to remove the remains to a shrine they had prepared within the church. In order to show his high disapproval of such a proceeding, St. Swithin caused it to rain for forty days, and for this space of time delayed the transfer of his bones, though exactly how the rain interfered with the monks accomplishing their object, we could not gather; that, we presume, was only a matter of detail. 'Hence,' according to the verger, 'arose the legend of St. Swithin's Day.'

Many other things of interest we both saw and were told of, but I must say no more about Winchester and its treasure stores; perchance I have already said too much, considering that I began by stating I had no intention of mentioning its many historical and traditional possessions; but with so much worthy of description and inspection, once started upon the subject it is hard to know where to leave off.

It was a hot morning, that on which we left Winchester, a close thundery kind of a day: not only had we the heat to contend against, but the roads were very dusty, and we were soon as white as millers. Dust rather than rain is the chief drawback to the perfect enjoyment of a driving tour. But on the whole, dust or rain, we felt we had little to complain of. It is well to remember we cannot get perfection in this world, and were it not for the occasional annoyances we have perforce to put up with, we should not properly appreciate the good things we have when we get them. Summer without winter would not be half so much enjoyed as it is; wet weather makes us value sunny days all the more. Contrasts are always desirable. We must take the evil with the good, the rough with the smooth, and be thankful for the good things we have.

Everlasting sunshine and a clear, changeless, cloudless sky would be intolerable to me; a monotony of good things is after all a monotony. Much as we complain of the rain (too much indeed, I think), were England a less moist climate, its scenery would not be nearly so charming.

To the left of our road we had a good view of the church and hospital of St. Cross, founded as far back as 1136 as a refuge and quiet home for thirteen old men, and providing as well daily doles for others outside the walls. This hospital is unique of its kind, and is possibly almost the last if not the very last place in England where the charity of food-giving is still continued, according to the old foundation. The 'wayfarer's dole,' as it is called, consists of 'a horn of ale and a slice of bread;' this, we were told, is given to all who ask for it 'until the dole for the day is expended.' We should much like to have presented ourselves before the porter's gate, and to have received the dole, as did the pilgrims and road travellers of old, but threatening clouds were gathering around, and we deemed it advisable not to loiter on our way. The ale, we were informed, 'was of the thinnest, and the bread generally hard and stale;' but whether this is really so, not having sampled them, we could not say; moreover, it does not do for 'beggars to be choosers.' Bread and ale, even if the bread be stale and the ale weak, is not such a dreadfully bad repast for a genuinely hungry or starving man.

The weather by no means improved as we proceeded. And though it was no day for dallying, on chancing to glance backwards we had such a delightful view of the whole city, with the solemn grey cathedral

set in its midst keeping watch and ward over all, that we could not resist pulling up for a time to enjoy the prospect. And we thought of the good kindly hearted old bishop to whom the glorious cathedral owes so much of its grandeur—

Nations and thrones and reverend laws have melted like a dream,
Yet Wykeham's works are green and fresh beside the crystal stream.

The weather as we progressed looked more and more threatening. Wreathing, wrathful, jagged-edged storm clouds with a lurid appearance that betokened thunder were advancing steadily and resistlessly in front of us, an impending mass of menacing vapours, obscuring the bright blue above, and darkening the heavens as they drove along. The wind came and went in fitful gusts, wailing eerily as it hurried past us, bending down the trees before its fierce blasts, crunching them one against another, and causing them to groan and quiver at its fury. Small branches, stems and fir cones, torn from off these, were dashed from time to time against us, and others strewed our path.

There was no shelter within sight, so, to use a nautical expression, we made 'all taut' and prepared as best we could to meet the impending downpour. Macintoshes were quickly donned, waterproof aprons got out, and none too soon. The wind for a moment had dropped, an ominous stillness was in the air, an unnatural silence reigned, but it was only the calm that precedes a storm—the peace was merely momentary. Then without further warning javelins of steel were dashed down upon us, stinging our faces in a pitiless manner, striking the earth so hard as to rebound again, and hitting our horses so

mercilessly, that, smarting under the icy darts, they became almost unmanageable, and reared and plunged about in an alarming manner.

Torn masses of louring vapour were flying past us overhead, overpowering masses that, were it not for the storm-wind that hurried them along, seemed almost as if they would descend and crush us. Then came a sudden blinding flash of light, followed by a prolonged roar of thunder, majestic and awful, rolling and resounding, echoing and re-echoing all around. The storm had commenced in right earnest, and we were in the thick of it. The horses, goaded almost to madness by the stinging hail, dashed frantically onwards almost beyond control. Fortunately, very fortunately, for us, the road ahead was straight and clear. As the lightning with startling vividness ever and anon darted from out this vastness of darkness, the alarmed steeds would suddenly stop, trembling with terror; then, when the thunder followed loud and long, they would tear along at a truly terrific pace, the wheels soughing through the wet roads and liberally covering us with mud. To keep our horses in hand at all was no easy feat; we had enough to do to keep on the road, which by happy chance was uninterrupted. But the thought would arise: if we came suddenly into Southampton with our horses in this uncontrollable state, what might not be the result? However the town was still some distance off, and we trusted before we arrived there to get the horses calmed down. The road soon became an amateur river, miniature lakes were formed in the fields, the ditches were converted into quite respectable torrents. It was a wet, wild, wretched drive; but the storm was too severe to last long, though whilst it

lasted it did its best to make things as disagreeable and uncomfortable as possible. Even in these depressing circumstances, we could not avoid noticing what a beautiful approach it was to Southampton; the road was lined with trees, woods were on either side of us; it was like driving along an extended avenue of some magnificent park.

As we came in sight of the town, the storm ceased as suddenly as it had begun; the sun now and again managed to struggle through the dun-coloured masses of shapeless vapour, bright gleams lit up for a moment the billowy confusion overhead—a moment of warmth in a cold grey wilderness of surging clouds—then all was gloom and cheerless shade again.

Southampton looked very wet, everything was dripping, the roofs and roadways gleamed and glistened in the watery sunlight; it was as though the town had just arisen from out the sea. Here we found a very comfortable old-fashioned inn, whilst taking our ease in which another deluge came on; then the skies brightened for a time. The weather though improving was by no means settled; it appeared half inclined to storm and rain, half inclined to clear, halting between two opinions, as though it could not make up its mind which to do. And this undecided state of affairs kept us in suspense. We were close to the New Forest, and we had so looked forward to sleeping at Lyndhurst, its wood-environed capital, that night. Should we venture to face the elements again, or, being well off where we were, should we remain? Finally our love of the country got the better of our prudential reasonings; we ordered the horses to be put to, and found ourselves once more bowling merrily on our way.

Leaving the town, we presently found ourselves skirting Southampton Water. 'Fortune favours the brave;' the sun showed signs of gaining the mastery over the less propitious elements: it was gradually melting and breaking the aqueous vapours up, turning them into an array of fantastic shapes, glorifying them with wondrous glowing tints in rare profusion. Nature is prodigal of her colours when she paints a scene; she considers not the rarity or value of the tints; a world of ultramarine, or rubies, or emeralds, or diamonds, is nothing to her.

It was a damp moist world after all the rain: even the sea appeared wetter than usual. And what a sight it was to see the crimson-tipped crested waves chasing each other, racing shoreward along in a countless confused multitude; order in seeming disorder. The distant waves were touched with gold and shaded with grey, gradually merging into others of gold and green nearer shore; the sky overhead changing from delicate green to pearly greys, from these through palpitating purples and glowing orange to the glorious sun itself, a burning circle of fire in the midst of melting rubies.

Colour everywhere, ever-moving, changing tints; reds and yellows in the cloud-woven sky above, yellows, greens, and greys in the moving, gleaming, glancing waters below, and these all touched with fringing flames of sun-fire.

Soon afterwards, passing some peaceful cottages and sleepy hamlets, we entered the New Forest, new only in name, old in every other respect. Strangely enough, the word 'forest' seems to be losing its original meaning in England: Dartmoor, Exmoor, the Forest of

Clun, though so called, are in reality no longer deserving of the title, being all bare and treeless as a rule. And so here the natives understand by 'forest' the extensive stretches of open moors or heath-lands in which the region abounds; the forest proper they call 'the woods.' This confusion of terms bothered us not a little at first; it was hard to realise the fact that absence of trees made the forest.

The road from Southampton to Lyndhurst when it enters the forest has only one fault (but it is a great one), one drawback to its otherwise undeniable beauty —it is too straight. Now, though straight lines have their value, their virtues are more mechanical than eye-pleasing. Had the road only twisted about a little, it would have been, of its kind, perfect; but the uncompromising straight cut through the forest reminded us more of an American track than a portion of an English highway. How different this long-drawn-out monotony to the charming twistings and turnings of a country lane, where each bend serves but to entice you farther along just to discover what fresh unknown and unexpected beauty lies concealed beyond. On such winding ways, the attraction to proceed is irresistible, we never know when or where to stop. When all before you is revealed for miles, this special charm is gone.

Nature as an almost invariable rule abhors straight lines: witness the clouds, the rocks, the trees, the hills around—where are there any? Only in the distant sea horizon, as far as I am aware, is there any apparent straightness in Nature; but even this she hides with cloud-shadows, glistening lights, misty haze or darkening form-subduing shades, causing indefiniteness and

uncertainty, so that the displeasing idea of one long uniform line is lost. Having such by the inevitable laws of the universe, how carefully she endeavours to disguise its possession! Truly we know it is there, as we know there are mountains in the moon, but it does not assert itself, we feel its existence rather than have it forced upon us,

But though this road had the failing of formality, in every other respect it was a most beautiful one. The hour, too, was perfect; there was a deep tranquillity all around, the luminous amber sky contrasted well with the varying greens of the far-stretching woods. The frequent pools and water-filled ruts of the wet roadway brought down the gold from the sky above; the grasses and the leaves of the trees, moisture-laden as they were, reflected too the golden glory. Each leaf, each blade of grass, seemed to possess its own special raindrop, which sparkled or glowed in the lustrous light, like diamonds or rare gems; even the tiny frail cobwebs hanging between the branches had their share of Nature's jewels flashing forth iridescent hues of opalescent loveliness. Each kind of tree and leaf held the moisture in its own peculiar way; some were glossy, and seemed to contain in their palms vast emeralds, reflecting as they did the smooth green of their own substance; others held the drops suspended like so many diamonds; still others again, as the firs, held them like strings of beads, threads of countless pearls or topazes, as the light chanced to strike them. A wonderful vision of beauty all this. We felt as though we were surely travelling through some fabled fairy forest, sprinkled everywhere with rarest gems of wondrous worth. Even the authors of the 'Arabian

Nights' never conceived anything half so surprisingly magnificent.

We wondered as we drove along if it was on this very road that the body of the arrow-stricken Rufus was drawn slowly and tediously along, 'the blood from his wound reddening the way.' Tradition says, as all schoolboys know, that the king was accidentally shot by an arrow glancing from off a tree, and this account has, I believe, come to be accepted as an historical fact, yet I think it remains an open question whether or not his death was really accidental. If it were, why was his body, bleeding and untended, hurried in such indecent haste along the dusty roads to Winchester, on a common charcoal burner's cart? Why was he buried so precipitately the next morning, 'unhouseled, unanointed, and unaneled'? Why was no proper investigation made as to the actual cause of his death? Then, curiously enough, the early chronicles make no mention of the arrow glancing from off the tree, that tradition was added afterwards; at first, it is to be remarked, the arrow was reported 'to have rebounded from the back of a beast of chase:' the improbability of this doubtless led to the substitution of a tree for an animal. Tyril and Rufus, as far as can be learnt now, were at the time of the occurrence alone together. Immediately afterwards Tyril unmolested was allowed to reach France, not such an easy feat in those days. The king was hated by the Church for his gross tyranny; a sort of 'killing no murder' crusade was preached against him, and unless the prelates of the time had the power of prophecy, the continual remarks made by them to the effect that the 'Divine vengeance and judgment of God would quickly fall upon him,' is, to say the least,



A BY-PATH IN THE NEW FOREST.

somewhat strange. Nor must the recorded sermon of Fulchered, Abbot of Shrewsbury, delivered *the day before the event*, be forgotten ; these were the ominous words used : 'The bow of God's vengeance is bent against the wicked. The arrow swift to wound is already drawn out of the quiver. Soon will the blow be struck.' This sentence is surely full of pregnant meaning. For these and other reasons that space forbids me to mention, I think there is fair ground to conclude Rufus's death was not altogether accidental.

Lyndhurst appeared to us a charming townlet, with its forest surroundings so utterly unlike any other place in England. It boasts also of a comfortable cosy hotel, in keeping with the rural look of the spot. We had a delightfully snug little sitting-room here, and we were in all respects well cared for. N.B. : for those it may concern—this peaceful retired place would suit honeymooners to perfection. How adapted to the purpose are the wanderings through the woodland solitudes all around, with paths just wide enough for two, leading everywhere and nowhere, frequently losing themselves in leafy recesses—dreams of sylvan loveliness.

How delightful it is to have in this thickly peopled England of ours, such an extensive playground so near our own doors, so wild, natural, and unspoilt—a bit of old England, as England was before she became civilised and a power upon earth. But care must be taken that this grand old forest, one of the few and finest remaining to us from former days, is not spoilt by the improving hand of man. We noticed, to our sorrow and amazement, in various places plantations of

rhododendrons, laurels, and deodaras. Now, though these showy shrubs are very good things in their way, their way is very far indeed from this relic of ancient England. We do not want our fine old forests reduced to the level of a large pleasure garden, or converted into a kind of vast suburban shrubbery. Surely there is diversity enough of English trees, without introducing showy foreign shrubs, which look what they are, strangers out of place. Have we not, amongst numerous others, the storm-defying oak, typical of strength, in such contrast to the graceful lady-like silver birch; the stately elm, the smooth glossy beech,. the dark gloomy pine, the odorous lime, the picturesque chestnut, the humble thorn beautiful in bloom, the river-loving willow? What a wealth of variety!

A spare week might be spent to worse advantage than in exploring this historical old forest; possibly if one week were spent, others would follow, as we were told the taste for the forest grows upon its devotees. Nor is it a difficult thing to acquire this love. In these days of city crowding and artificial life, a little primeval wandering, without the loss of time or expense of distant travel, is a thing to be encouraged and enjoyed.

Although in England, none the less is the New Forest a grand wild wooded solitude, far more beautiful and varied than forests mostly are.

Mr. Eyre, a great explorer, stated before the Select Committee of 1875, 'that he did not half appreciate the New Forest until he had travelled, and that experience led him to the conviction that there is nothing like it in the world.' Truly, there is nothing like foreign

wandering to reveal the beauties we have at home. And a driving tour is the best possible way of discovering these. Does not the poet say :

> It is well worth
> A year of wandering, were it but to feel
> How much our England does outweigh the world ?

CHAPTER VI.

Old Work and New—Forest Frequenters—A pseudo-Relic—*Bric-à-brac* Hunting—A strange Collection of Curiosities—Woodland Silence and Solitude—An old Farmstead—The Beauty of Age in Buildings—A Gipsy Encampment—A Gipsy's Life—Christchurch—An old Minster—Village Churches—A Desecrated Chapel—Bournemouth—Luxurious Quarters—A Quarrelsome Couple—Pine Woods—Imagination and Sentiment—A hardworked Clergyman—Corfe Castle—Poole—Tales of Smugglers—Wareham—A Town of the Past.

LYNDHURST is fortunate in the possession of a pretty and (architecturally speaking) fairly successful modern church; a thing few places can boast of. Its situation, too, is happy, being well placed on the flank of a hill.

Too often, alas! the churches we raise in the present day are either poor copies of old work or insipid originals. Such structures hardly impress one as being erected to the glory of God; modern ecclesiastical work is but too suggestive of the contractor. When we are about to commence a fresh edifice, 'How much will it cost to build?' is the question we ask ourselves, not 'How beautiful can we make it?' We endeavour to get the greatest show for the least money, a proceeding fatal to all good work. We look for quantity rather than quality. And the natural result of all this is, our productions are feelingless and cold and essentially mechanical. We have but too successfully turned our workmen into machines, they are no longer artists as were the mediæval craftsmen. It is

sad to think that it should be so, but the fact cannot be gainsaid.

I have often wondered to myself, when viewing some old-time church, if when new it could ever have appeared commonplace. I hardly think so. There is something about these old works of our sturdy ancestors that gives the impression to the beholder—however simple the structure, and often the simpler the stronger the feeling—that both the designer and workman loved their work; it does not look laboured, and you cannot but feel that a mere money payment for what they did was not all in all with them.

Time, of course, has favoured these old structures; it has painted their walls with many tints, has mellowed and toned down the whole as only time can. Many-coloured lichens, mosses, and trailing ivy have also done their part, and moreover the flavour of age and the associations of a hallowed past help to add to their charms; but take all these away, still there is something left that a modern building seems never to possess.

But, after this long digression, to return to the pretty brick-built church at Lyndhurst. It has many merits and few faults, and on the whole is a vast improvement upon most modern attempts in this line. It seems, therefore, hardly gracious to search out the shortcomings of such a well-intentioned endeavour. However, to be ungracious for once, it appears to me there has been too much of an attempt to gain effect by ornamentation and too little trusting to simplicity. We appear in the present day strangely to overlook the value of well-ordered space, of pleasing flowing lines, to neglect the beauty of form and to rely too

much upon ornament. Architecture is a matter of construction; ornamentation can never take the place of this, or disguise the poverty of a poor design. Legitimate construction taken advantage of and skilfully decorated, that is what makes so much of the old work so pleasing. The endeavour to be original also has led us into strange paths. Too often it has caused us to raise up rather freaks in stone than worthy or serious buildings. Meaningless structures with stuck-on decorations, sadly betraying their origin, and covered with irrelevant carvings, serious without spirit, ugly without being grotesque, bold yet feeble, and wanting altogether the life and playfulness of the old work, expensive eyesores, whose only value is as an example of what not to do. Such, however, cannot be said of the carvings or decorations of Lyndhurst church. The sculpturing of the capitals is worthy of all praise, and savours of the forest surroundings, being thus both characteristic and appropriate, giving to the edifice the rare quality of individuality and revealing something to the observer. This is as it should be, but seldom is. The carvings are faithful representations of the trees, leaves, plants, flowers, and ferns to be found around. But the chief attraction of the pleasing interior was to us the fine reredos fresco by Sir F. Leighton, P.R.A., a generous gift of that famous artist. Such art treasures are, alas! now-a-days rare in our churches, and therefore the more to be appreciated when they do exist. A time there was when most of our churches were storehouses of beauty, rejoicing in a wealth of wonderful carvings in stone and oak, rich in glowing windows of painted glass, adorned with frescoes and statues, and glorying in gold and colour,

an art education in themselves. The men of old made their places of worship as beautiful as they knew how; they had no conception of a God delighting in ugliness. Now our churches are plain, but we take care to make our homes lovely. But the glory of these old fanes is no more, thanks to Puritan intolerance. And what a loss is ours! It is hard to credit that men actually lived who stabled their horses in these miracles of architecture, who turned the curiously carved stalls into mangers, men to whom nothing beautiful was sacred, and who made piety an excuse for plunder, and religious zeal a reason for wilful destruction.

Strolling during the course of the evening into the little smoke-room of the inn, I was much entertained by the conversation. I made a capital listener, not joining at all in the talk; in truth, I should have been 'all at sea' had I done so; it was racy of the soil, of the forest and nothing but the forest, of campings out, picnics, anecdotes of losing the way and so forth in superabundance, much as the conversation at an angler's hostelrie is of fishing, fishing and nothing else. Here I learnt that there are a number of people who yearly and regularly frequent this portion of England, and it would seem hardly go to any other spot. 'He's a forest man,' and 'He's not a real forest man,' were expressions constantly in vogue; so I gathered there is a kind of freemasonry amongst the frequenters of the forest.

Soundly we slept that night beneath the sign of the Crown at Lyndhurst, awoke early to a bright sunny morning, and profited by it so far as to take a stroll round about before breakfast. We saw the old mansion, called 'the Queen's House,' in the hall of

which is to be seen a large rusty iron stirrup, or what is called such, which if you have sufficient faith you may try to believe once belonged to William Rufus. But matter-of-fact antiquaries assert it is not older than the sixteenth century. Some even have dared to state it is of more recent origin, much to the disgust of the Lyndhurstites, who firmly believe in it. It is a pity such evident pseudo-relics should be shown as authentic, it is apt to make one doubt the genuineness of all such things. Still, it must be remembered, some relics are genuine beyond all reasonable doubt. Amongst numerous others are to be noted the pastoral staff of St. Fillans, now in Edinburgh, which possesses a strange and eventful though traceable history, and there are many other such valued treasures scattered here and there throughout the kingdom. At Largs, a small fishing village in Scotland, are still carefully preserved in the hands of his lineal descendants the drinking horn and musket of Alexander Selkirk, and numerous undoubtedly genuine relics are treasured in different parts of the country. Still, I have been informed on good authority, in fact by a dealer in such articles, that several skilled workmen are kept in constant employment manufacturing ancient relics! This I can vouch for as a fact.

Never missing an opportunity on our journeys of inspecting any old curiosity shop that we happened to run against, we came in this way in contact with many singular characters; and though we found but few actual treasures to take home with us, our *bric-à-brac* hunts gave us many strange insights into the frailties of human nature. Upon one occasion we came across a worthy individual, a Jew, the proprietor of one of

these curiosity shops, who showed us amongst his varied and rare collection of antiquities, the veritable helmet of Oliver Cromwell, worn, I think he stated, at Naseby, also Robin Hood's bow and some of his arrows, an iron casket belonging to Mary Queen of Scots, and sundry other relics, sufficient to set up quite a respectable museum. Many of these were undoubtedly antique articles, but had been fostered upon different renowned personages, to give them a fictitious value. From all we saw, it appears to me that the manufacture and allotment of antique relics is a prosperous if not an exactly honest business. Whilst, of course, it is well to be not over-confiding in the genuineness of old things, still it is well also not to have too sceptical a spirit, or to be like the man who proved Robinson Crusoe's history to be false because the rice he planted could never have grown as stated, it being dressed and its fructifying properties destroyed!

A pleasant lonely drive we had after leaving Lyndhurst, through the forest solitude. There was no disturbing element anywhere around; all was quietude and peace. The only sound we heard besides the crunching of our carriage wheels on the gravelly road was the subdued murmuring of the wind through the leafy woods.

Delightful peeps of sylvan glades we had as we drove along; and how gratefully cool appeared the tree-shaded vistas that opened up before us—what pleasant spots, what secluded retreats, did they not lead our eyes to!—spots made by Nature in which to dream away in a profitable idleness the long summer day, watching the softened sunshine gleaming down through the lambent leaves overhead, forming ever-

changing patterns of green and gold upon the emerald sward around. How refreshing are such peaceful resting nooks to the town-tired eye, how soothing to the ear wearied with the city's incessant din is the lulling music of the woodlands, a mingled harmony of rustling leaves, songs of birds, and humming of wandering bees.

Again there is a silence of the woods, a solitude, but it is a companionable silence and solitude, it is not of the oppressive order as is that of open space; you can be as much alone in a forest as upon a far-stretching moorland or a bleak mountain top, but you never seem so lonely. You have more of a home feeling; your eye can never travel far, it is bounded on all sides and above by a roof of green. You have therefore a sense of snugness and limitation; but, at the same time, it must be owned the eye grows weary of being ever bounded thus, a longing for a horizon is sure sooner or later to take possession of it, a longing which insists upon being gratified. Neither has a forest the variety, or the charm of special character, of a more open landscape. Mountain dwellers love their homes because of their hills, they are as old, changeless, familiar friends to them. Trees may vary in kind, but after all trees are trees, and bear a resemblance more or less to each other, forests to one another, in the same climate of course, that no mountain peaks ever do.

Presently the woods ceased, and a far-stretching expanse of tree-encircled purple-tinted heatherland lay before us, the crimson heather contrasting delightfully with the cool fresh greens of the long waving grass and the yellow of young bracken, and this glowing mass was further brightened up here and there with

patches of lustrous gorse, and in the midst of it all a pool of water shone out like some monster diamond. Paint box and sketch book were quickly brought out, and the scene with all its wonderment of colour was transferred to paper to the best of our poor ability; but how feeble was the attempt compared to the glorious reality! Still we took away with us something wherewith to remind us of that rare bit of Nature's painting, an aid to Memory, to help her to bring it back to us when in dear old smoke-begrimed London.

Hardly knowing when or where, we found that at last we had left the forest for good behind. A cultivated country had become slowly evolved out of the moorland wastes and wooded wildernesses. It was a gradual progress from the sylvan to the pastoral and agricultural; there appeared to be no harsh contrast, no sharp dividing line, rather a pleasing natural merging of one into the other.

It was a drive of great beauty on to Christchurch, a drive to make man thankful for the loveliness of the world. On our way we passed many rural homes the very picture of happy contentment. One particularly struck us as being as nearly picturesque perfection as anything of the kind could be; and this is what we saw, only it requires a more skilled hand than mine to do the old house justice. An ancient warm red-brick and ruddy-tiled farmstead, time-toned to a soft harmonious tint, its walls painted here and there many hues with gold and silver lichens, the whole backed with dark green rook-haunted trees. It was a long low building with quaint large chimney stacks and high pitched gables, and curious old dormer windows. The house had evidently been altered and added to at

different times by former generations of owners, to which cause it doubtless owed its happy irregularity; it could never have been designed as a whole so delightfully eye-pleasing. It must have grown to its rural art perfection: to raise all at once so rambling and varying a structure, would be mere affectation. It is time that 'lends enchantment to the view,' so far as such old piles go. The charm of antiquity, the story of the past they tell, are things a brand-new building never can possess; these money cannot buy, and no amount of wilful eccentricities or strange caprices in bricks and mortar can give them.

What a comfortable abode that rambling farmstead seemed—what a happy picture of rural life! Its ample porch spoke a welcome, and its lattice-leaded windows sparkled in the sunshine, brightening up the prospect. And the outbuildings around were not less picturesque; the weather-beaten swallow-beloved barns and uneven-roofed moss-grown sheds, the old grey stone-raised granary, and the age-browned tumble-down waggon or implement shelter, all combined to make a perfect picture. Nor must the somewhat neglected flower garden be forgotten, with its yellow straw beehives, each protected from the weather by sundry old brown earthenware pans turned upside down. How refreshing is a sight of these old-fashioned gardens, with their old-world flowers, snapdragons, pinks, pansies, and sunflowers! There is a quaint homely look about such, delighting in disorder as they do, that has a great charm for me. What a happy domesticated look these rural homes possess—what a suggestion of peaceful enjoyment they give to the passer-by! It seems to me, the owners of such ought to be supremely thankful



AN OLD ENGLISH FARMSTEAD.

that their lots have fallen in such pleasant places, and that they have not been compelled to inherit and inhabit such gloomy stately piles of stone and mortar as Blenheim, Chatsworth, and other similar mansions that abound in England. Who would willingly exchange the quiet, cosy, unostentatious comfort of such homelike liveable houses for the most magnificent palace residence in Britain?

Not far from this old farmstead which had pleased us so much, by the side of the road in a tree-shaded nook we noticed a gipsy's encampment, and we thought what a delightful thing it would be for a time to turn gipsy, to wander about the forest thus, camping out here and there, and generally rusticating and enjoying a temporary Bohemian existence.

The gipsy is a picturesque personage, with his slow-travelling caravan, his dark-eyed red-kerchiefed wife and troop of nut-brown children; and though undoubtedly an incurable vagabond, still somehow he always appeals to my sympathies, for is he not also a fellow-traveller on wheels? His camps-out too, such as the one we saw, on a pleasant stretch of sward by the wayside, with sundry swing kettles supported on tripods having a crackling fire of burning sticks beneath, and the necessary adjunct of slowly upward curling blue smoke, are ready-made pictures in themselves.

Unfortunately his morals are not always altogether what they should be; his ideas of *meum* and *tuum* are, to say the least, somewhat hazy. He has the unenviable reputation of looking over hedges for linen hanging out to dry, and, if no one is about, of helping himself to some, also of prowling round hen-roosts in the early morning for no honest purpose. Indeed, he and his

family are by no means over-particular as to how or where they gather in their supplies, and they ever keep a sharp look-out for the opportunity of appropriating anything. Foraging expeditions to help to replenish the time-honoured kettle are gaily entered into by the whole family; they have no idea of the wickedness of stealing—'requiring' is the word they employ, I believe—the only sin is in being found out.

But I must say the gipsy is no hypocrite, he makes no pretensions to virtues he has not; nay, if you can only gain his confidence—a by no means easy feat—you will learn that rather than otherwise he even glories in his failings, and takes to himself considerable pride in the smart manner he at times 'conveys' certain articles from the rightful owner to himself.

However, his conscience seems to trouble him but little; so long as he does not get into difficulties and make the acquaintance of the nearest magistrate, he appears jolly enough and to thoroughly enjoy his free and easy roving existence. 'As jolly as a sand-boy,' is an old proverb; rather, I think, it should be as jolly as a gipsy. Even though many of us undoubtedly still retain some trace of the nomadic instincts of our long-departed forefathers, we cannot, supposing we should so desire, all turn gipsies, but we can, as a complete change and distraction from our every-day life and surroundings, do a little amateur gipsying on our own account should time and means permit, much to our own enjoyment, provided we have any taste that way, and to the great benefit of our health.

There are few more delightful methods of spending a summer holiday than by wandering hither and thither, driving or afoot, about our own beautiful land.

'Not unrecompensed the man shall roam
Who at the call of summer quits his home,
And plods o'er some wide realm, o'er vale and height,
Though seeking only holiday delight.

Approaching Christchurch, we caught a welcome sight of the sunlit sea on the far-off horizon vaguely gleaming under the soft silvery sky; the air had a perceptible scent of the ocean—a salt-laden breath so invigorating and delightful, so indescribable in words.

A sleepy little town is Christchurch, with a glorious old minster, hoary with the age of centuries, which crowns the strange sea-girt hill by its side, watching over the lowly dwellings beneath—a town where the world seems to move more slowly than its ordinary wont, where no one ever is or could possibly be in a hurry. The glory of the place is the grand priory church; this stately pile had a great fascination for us, a sort of magnetic hold upon our feelings. Long and lovingly we looked upon and wandered over the sacred edifice. Old churches are almost always worth seeing, even the humblest often well repay inspection; and as nearly every hamlet or village in England possesses one of more or less interest, however dull the place may be, it is seldom but that a leisurely ramble over its humble fane will worthily repay the time so spent. When all else failed, we generally found something to delight us in these ancient structures. But Christchurch minster is no lowly place of worship: standing, as it does, sadly, solemnly, silently, all alone, an impressive mass of grey sculptured stone, burdened with the weight of years, beautiful with the bloom of centuries, suggestive of past days of monks and masses, of feasts and fasts, it seemed to us a very romance in stone. Its time-toned

walls, damp-stained in places, weather-worn with the exposure of ages, tinted with many colours, lichen-encrusted as well, the stone carvings chipped and frost-crumbled here and there, told everywhere the story of the changes and chances of its long life.

How many generations of worshippers, saints and sinners, have come and gone since that old fane first rose in glorious majesty, how many feet have trod those well-worn steps, to how many solemn chants and swelling anthems sung by sandalled monks have those aged walls not re-echoed! What whisperings of forgotten sins to the father confessors by lips all silent now, what tearful prayers, spoken or unuttered, have been breathed or felt within this hallowed pile! What glorious rituals performed by priests arrayed in gorgeous vestments, what blazes of lighted candles upon the high altar thick with burning incense, what desecration by the stern Puritan troops (who made the church a common barracks and the choir a stable) have they not witnessed! The interior contains a notable chapel, built by Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, granddaughter of Warwick the king-maker and the mother of Cardinal Pole, who intended it for her last resting place. However, the fates ordained otherwise, she being accused of high treason and beheaded at the Tower. At her execution she refused to lay her head upon the block. 'So should traitors do,' she exclaimed, 'but I am none;' and it is recorded the headsman had to 'butcher her as best he could.' The heraldic arms and decorations she had caused to be carved within the chapel, as may be observed, were carefully, or rather ruthlessly, destroyed by the king's myrmidons, though singularly enough her motto, '*Spes mea in Deo est*,' is still to be traced.

From Christchurch to Bournemouth was an uninteresting drive, or rather perhaps I should be more correct in saying it seemed so to us after our lovely stage of the morning. We had become spoilt by so much beauty, and were, I fear, in consequence somewhat exacting and hard to please. Possibly had not our previous journey been so abounding in varied loveliness we should have thought the road a very pretty one. However that may be, driving into Bournemouth from ancient Christchurch was like passing from one century to another—that sudden transition from a town so fraught with antiquity to one so new, from the ancient sober quiet to the gay modern restlessness, was a step indeed! At Christchurch we had veritably lived for a time in the past; but Bournemouth effectually took all our dreams away. There was no doubt about our existing in the nineteenth century there, everything reminded us of it. Christchurch seemed a place where the railway whistle was an anachronism, Bournemouth seemed as though it could not exist without one. A few miles, and what a change! You might cross the Atlantic and not find a more startling contrast, or at any rate, if you did, it would lose the effect of suddenness.

Bournemouth, as the guide-books inform us, is of very recent growth (for this old country, at any rate, where mushroom cities do not spring up in a few short months); fifty years or less ago there was only a single house here, now it is quite a fashionable and flourishing town, and a pretty one withal. The equable temperature and the healing properties of the aromatic-laden pine-tree air have made the place. My road book, 'Paterson,' 1826 and last edition, does

not even mention Bournemouth, although it has a most comprehensive index of towns, villages, and even solitary inns and houses, many hundreds altogether. I have not counted either (life is too short for such occupations), but judging from appearances I should say the list of places given in 'Paterson's Roads' far exceeds in number those of his railway successor, 'Bradshaw.'

The Royal Bath Hotel here we found exceedingly comfortable, not to say luxurious. In the drawing-room we came across a table with an inscription thereon which informed us that it was used by Benjamin Disraeli, Prime Minister of England, during his stay at the hotel, otherwise there was nothing remarkable about the table.

In the evening we joined the *table d'hôte*, which was an excellent one; but good as it was, we altogether failed to enjoy it, owing to a newly married couple sitting next to us who quarrelled the whole of the time. This untoward incident made us feel most uncomfortable, and we were glad when the affair was over. Evidently the husband was a bad bargain for the poor wife, and the look of disgust she gave him from time to timewas not agreeable to observe. Moreover they, or rather he, let everyone know the cause of their disagreement. And what do you think it was? The man was actually grumbling at the expense of the honeymoon! though from what we could make out his poor unfortunate better-half — very much his better-half, we thought—had no extravagant ideas. He actually kept discussing at the public table, loud enough for all to hear, how much they should have saved if they had only travelled second class instead

of first during their marriage trip! He had even calculated the very amount, which he mentioned. And yet his fat fingers glittered with diamond rings, and his waistcoat was burdened with a massive gold chain. His wife's diamond ring, however, we observed, was not noticeable on account of the size or brilliancy of the gems. Poor woman! we pitied her; this her wedding trip, and she looked so miserable and disgusted.

If the squabbling spoilt our temporary enjoyment, what must the newly wedded wife have felt? Her lot appeared to us a terribly sad one. She seemed as one awakening out of a dream, and to be realising the fearful irretrievable mistake she had made.

The man I came across later in the evening, smoking an evidently expensive cigar, and muttering to himself something about the extravagance of woman. Well, there are some strange beings in this world!

Leaving Bournemouth, we struck upon some pine forests, through whose fragrant recesses we journeyed along agreeably sheltered from the warm sunshine. There is one peculiarity of these kinds of woods wherein they differ from all others, and it is a peculiarity that makes wandering through such specially pleasant. The fallen needles of the trees, unlike the leaves of other woods, are preserved by their resinous properties, they rather dry up than decay; therefore the ground beneath is free from damp and the entangled undergrowth it encourages.

And what a special character a pine forest possesses, with its tall pillar-like trees with their rich red stems, warm close at hand, then fading away into a far-off mystery of blue, for you can see a long distance through

their mazy recesses. And what plaintive dirge-like strains the sea winds made as they hurried through the many trees, strains now dying away, now rising again, in an ever-mournful melancholy.

It may be fancy only—imagination and sentiment do a great deal in this world—but it seems to me the wind makes different melody with each kind of tree. The mournful wailing of the pine woods varies altogether from the gentle 'sur, sur, sur,' of the wind-stirred elms; the oak gives forth a sturdy voice, a martial sort of strain, as though he resisted and defied the blast; the countless leaves of the smooth beech give a soft silken slumberous sound as they rustle against each other in multitudinous numbers, like to the chattering and rippling of a stream over a pebbly bed; the lady-like birch gives a tremulous utterance, soft and low as the musical murmurings of an Æolian harp; and so the voices of the woods are many and characteristic to him who knows how to listen—wordless voices, but not meaningless ones.

Emerging from the darksome pine glades, we came upon a more open country; the dusty roads appeared dazzlingly white, the sun overhead glaringly hot, after our sombre shaded forest drive.

Here we came upon a clergyman going his parish rounds on a bicycle, looking very hot, very dusty, and nervous too, as though not quite sure of his steed. Stopping at a cottage door, we had a short chat with him, from which we gathered his parish was large, his stipend small, and his walking powers hardly equal to the long trampings he had to do; a horse he could not well afford, and so in an evil hour was led to purchase a bicycle, but after having learnt to ride it, said he

always went about upon it in constant fear and trembling of 'a spill.' We strongly advised him to exchange his 'two-wheeler' for a tricycle, which appeared to us a far more suitable machine for his purpose. It is not pleasant travelling dreading a possible catastrophe every minute.

The country now grew more level, the views expanded, and to our left as we proceeded, in the near distance, the ruined keep of Corfe Castle came into sight, looming up dark and frowning even under that bright white summer sky, as though nothing could lighten up its centuries of gathered gloom. Distant as it was, it impressed us with its stern forbidding appearance, a dark spot on the otherwise gladsome sunlit landscape. Desolate, disconsolate, devastated, its past grandeur and glories gone for ever, never by any possibility to return, still the old deserted stronghold seemed, as it were, to us too proud to ask for pity, too dignified to appeal for sympathy from the passer-by. Haughty and defiant even in its ruins, time and man have failed to conquer it: still it mournfully stands like one who has long outlived his need.

We now came to the quaint old rambling seaport of Poole, a town famous in the olden days for its desperate characters, the large majority of the population being pure and simple smugglers, and the remainder sympathising with them, for each depended on the other. Tradition even says that the parson was in league with them, and in return for his benevolent neutrality his cellar was always well supplied without any cost to himself. Upon one occasion, during Divine service (according to this said tradition), the worthy parson observed through the windows, from his vantage

ground in the pulpit, a body of the preventive men preparing for a raid; at once he broke the thread of his discourse with the remark, 'Brethren, the Philistines are down upon ye;' the hint was taken, and the congregation suddenly broke up, to look after their natural enemies. The many creeks round about were very favourable for 'running in a bit of carg'y.' Once safely ashore, the 'carg'y' was quickly disposed of amongst the many secret cellars, several of which still exist beneath the curious old red-brick houses that are scattered about the harbour in such picturesque confusion.

On dark wild nights, when the moon was hidden and dense grey clouds were travelling overhead apace, or when thick mists were obscuring all things, then there was excitement at Poole; bales of silks, casks of brandy, rum, and hollands, cases of tobacco, were 'run in,' and frequent frays were the order of the time, for, it is recorded, so bold and venturesome had the Dorsetshire smugglers become, gathered in bands and armed to the teeth, that they often fought their way on land successfully with their goods.

A daring set these rough men in petticoats were; they fought fearlessly and recklessly, 'caring naught for man nor devil,' ugly customers who made the coastguards' life here an exceedingly disagreeable and hazardous one. But Poole is very peaceful now, if less romantic than of old. The smuggler proper is a thing of the past; his paltry successor, who hides sundry cigars or bottles of brandy in his trunk or about his person, is not worthy of mention in the same breath, he is comparatively speaking an impostor, a characterless, spiritless, commonplace individual altogether.

So famous did Poole become, or rather such an evil reputation did the town acquire, by the audacious deeds of its inhabitants, that the following doggrel rhyme was often repeated by its envious and less prosperous neighbours, who, had opportunity offered, would doubtless not have objected to be wicked and wealthy too:

> If Poole were a real pool, and the men in it fish,
> The devil would have lots of fish for his dish.

A pleasant road without much of particular interest brought us to the slothful old town of Wareham, one of those few places in England that appear to be not only at a standstill, but to be actually going backwards, both in population and importance. Here we found the inn in a terrible state of disorder; a regular cleaning was going on, and everything was in consequence turned topsy turvy, and the interior was a scene of crowded confusion; however, a corner of a room was cleared for us, and in time we procured a well-cooked but uncomfortable meal, for which, however, we were thankful.

Whilst our horses were resting, we took a stroll round the place. Wareham in the ancient days of warriors and ceaseless wars came in for many hard blows, and was more than once sacked and burnt. Even to this day, traces of the extensive earthwork fortifications that surrounded it are plainly visible; but between it and the town, where houses once were, are now long stretches of gardens. Wareham was rather than is. Of the eight churches that in ancient times it boasted of, now only four remain, and one of these does duty as a guildhall. *Tempora mutantur.*

CHAPTER VII.

An Evening Drive—Country Odours—Sunsets—A lonely Road—A Hermit of a Dwelling—In the Gloaming—Hotel Bills—Weymouth—The Road Traveller's 'Bradshaw'—Inn Names—Cosy Cottages—An ideal Land—Mind Pictures—Country Homes —Maiden Castle—A prehistoric Relic—Moonland—Winterbourn Abbas—Origin of the Names of Places—A Druid's Circle—A rough Road—The old Highways—The varying Charms of a Landscape—Painting from Nature—A tired Tricyclist—Bridport.

IT was late when we left Wareham, and as the sun was then low down and the shadows were growing longer still and longer, we knew we were in for an evening drive. And we were pleased with the prospect, for the day had been hot and close, and the night promised to be cool and pleasant; and what if we were belated—should we not have the moon to cheer and lighten us on our way?

There is an indescribable charm about a summer evening drive. How delightful the country appears at that poetic hour! There is at such a time a feeling of mystery and solemnity where the landscape around lies veiled in a grey uncertainty. All that is vulgar or commonplace is either hidden or so softened down in the dim light as to lose its ugliness. An hour it is of deep tranquillity, one that brings with it an untold feeling of repose and rest; the cares of the day are over, and all things speak of labour ended—a time when

you feel supremely at peace with yourself and all the world.

How quietly then the smoke ascends from the wayside cottages, what a grateful silence seems to gather round as the sun slowly sinks to rest; the sleepy wind scarce stirs the quivering leaves, all sounds are hushed, only now and again by chance comes wafted to you softly on the stilly air a distant chime, the silvery tinkling from some unseen fold, or the musical murmuring of a wandering stream. Soothing sounds these, mellow drowsy whisperings that but serve to emphasise the general peacefulness.

How fragrantly, too, on the evening breeze are wafted the many blending country odours, that then seem so particularly to assert themselves. It may be that most delightful of all perfumes, new-mown hay, is amongst the number, or it may be the curious scent of a bean field in blossom, or that of the delicious honeysuckle, or of the lime tree in flower, or of the elder, or of a field of clover, or perchance it is the peculiar odour of the gorse, any one of which, if he could only secure it as it is in nature, would make the fortune of a Bond Street shopkeeper. And if your way lies in the 'North Countrie' the incense of burning peat may greet you, an incense that is so dear to all lovers of mountain lands, calling up to them so many treasured and varying recollections.

In the gloaming also there seems to arise a feeling of friendliness amongst those you may chance to meet or pass as you journey along, a feeling unknown in the busy daytime. How pleasantly sounds the cheery oft-repeated 'good night' from lonely fellow-wayfarer, or from the tired cottager, his day's toil over, lazily

resting against his garden gate. And as the darkness gathers apace, these greetings become the more welcome and companionable. How cheerfully, too, through the cool grey gloom gleams the warm streak of ruddy light, thrown across the road, from some stray window or open doorway. And should fortune favour and you chance to end your day's pilgrimage at some well-ordered rural country hostelrie, and find there a hearty welcome and good old-fashioned fare, you will in all probability conclude, whilst indulging in your evening pipe, unless you are of a disposition very hard to please, that there are few things in this world more enjoyable or more begetting of contentment than a driving tour : so, at least, under similar happy circumstances have I often felt.

As we proceeded westward on our way, another glorious sunset opened before us. Such beautiful phenomena are by no means the rarity in England many might imagine whose attention has not been called to the fact of their frequency. In cities we see too little of the sky, in the country one's prospect is not shut out by high walls all around, or led away by glaring gas and gleaming shop-window from the spreading loveliness overhead.

Above us was a bewildering maze of gold-embroidered ruby clouds, between which we caught peeps of a glowing amber sky, melting below into a crimson fire and fading higher up into an azure blue ; and here and there, in the cloudless spaces, trembling tiny star fires softly glimmered, growing more lustrous as the light decreased.

Gradually the gathering twilight encompassed us ; the sky grew paler and fainter, its fiery uprising radiant

colours vanished, and the day was ended. Yet it was not night; it was that hour of deep tranquillity, so endeared to lovers, that uncertain borderland between light and darkness, belonging to both, still of neither.

Dark, solemn, and silent was our little world; the uplands about us had changed from greens to purples, and from purples to greys, only upon the upmost ridges of the highest downs lingered lovingly a faint rosy tint, the last tender farewell of the dying day fondly clinging to earth as though loth to depart; but at last even this ruddy hue disappeared, the outlines of the hills became shadowy and indistinct, and so remained till the revealing moon arose, softly silvering all. What companions at night are the moon and stars to the belated traveller; then it is he comes to look upon them as welcome well-known friends.

Our way by degrees became more and more lonely, lonely but lovely still. The loneliness and quietude were in harmony with the desolate landscape. Both suited well our pensive mood. Now-a-days we live so much in crowds, travel so much in company, that the sense of solitary remoteness is a changeful relief to the monotony of multitudes.

We passed in one spot an isolated cottage, a very hermit of a building, standing secluded and retired enough from the outer world surely to have delighted the heart of the strictest anchorite, and we wondered what sort of an existence the dwellers within must lead.

Presently our elevated road began to descend alongside a slope of the dreary dome-like downs, whose sweeping outlines gradually lost themselves, in front of us, in a mystery of ever-growing greyness, their

massive majestic curves giving them a look of grandeur all their own, not the grandeur or greatness of mountains certainly, but an impressiveness of form and size, a vague vastness, in its way none the less sublime. They had the quality of indefiniteness of extent, an expressiveness of changeful forms. Possessing no single peak or prominent point attracting the eye upwards, they had, notwithstanding, a roundness and an undulating swelling leading it far away till all was lost in a misty dim uncertainty—a vanishing into unknown space. More suggestive was all this to us of vastness than any mere height could ever be: height has its limits, these downs seemed to have no end.

Truly a lonely road. Tightly packed as England is, there are still many portions of it that would lead the ignorant wanderer therein to imagine the very reverse. On some of our wild heathlands, waste moors, bleak wolds, or far-reaching downs, you may be as much isolated from your kind, as much alone, as though upon some desolate Western prairie. Certainly the prairie extends for leagues on leagues, is practically a boundless sea of land, in form as well as breadth, like a mighty billowy ocean suddenly stopped in its rolling and transformed to solid earth, but for all that you can only see a portion of it at a time. So are our English wild wastes, bleak and bare and lonely as far as one can see, the rest is only in the imagination. You cannot trace farther than the vision can reach; beyond may be an uninhabited wilderness or a populous city—what matters it which?

And so we drove on and on through a shadowy land, dark and sombre; it was a wild weird drive, full of strange shapes and forms like those one sees in dreams.

Spectral gaunt and grim trees, with outstretched arms, uncanny, rose up before us ever and again, and the dark downs seemed of a tremendous size in the murky blackness, a mighty chaos of matter. It was as though we were travelling through some unknown world, lone wanderers upon some distant planet, all things seemed so mystified and unreal, so unlike our every-day surroundings. Such fanciful imaginings may appear morbid, but so the scene impressed us, so we felt the solemn presence of those looming lonesome downs, the oppressiveness of their dreary desolateness, their silence and solitude.

Thus we journeyed slowly along; the road was not distinguishable save by the flickering uncertain light of our carriage lamps, a fitful glimmering that only made the general darkness more profound, till presently a break in the uplands and a rift in the clouds above disclosed to us a distant dreamy gleam of the heaving moonlit sea. The feeling of depression had gone.

Our seemingly interminable road came to an end in time. Hungry, tired, and very happy, we reached Weymouth, where, alighting at our inn, we found that best of all receptions for a tired traveller—a hearty welcome. Chance led us to an excellent hotel, and had we been of the grumbling order of travellers, which I am thankful to say we are not, I hardly think we could have invented a grievance. The only complaint we had was that the bill was rather high, but that did not trouble us till the end; 'ignorance is bliss' sometimes, and moreover had we not many most reasonable bills to set against this one? On the whole our expenditure on the road was exceedingly moderate; it cost us far less travelling as we did than it would have

done had we been merely staying at one of the usual run of seaside hotels. If now and then we had an exorbitant bill, our whole average in this respect was the reverse of high. We concluded that altogether our English country inns are both homely and comfortable, and the charges for the accommodation afforded very moderate.

Weymouth somehow pleased us not; the fault possibly lay in ourselves, and not in the place. The sea there is a tame affair, a lazy spiritless sea, one fit to swim toy boats on, and for children to play with and paddle in, and that is all. But we like it not thus confined and hemmed in by cliffs and breakwaters, but open, free, wild, wilful, and illimitable, its own natural restless self, not looking like a placid lake, without the beauty of hills, woods, and islands to charm its stilly flood and break its monotony of surface by reflected loveliness.

Consulting our 'Paterson' overnight (a most useful book, without which we never travel), we observed in the road column out of Weymouth the following notice: 'Travellers in a chaise, who have occasion to go from Weymouth to Bridport, by turning to the left to Upway, and leaving Dorchester on the right, will save a change of chaise, a turnpike, and nearly four miles of distance.' As we were bound for Bridport, and had no desire to add any unnecessary miles to our already sufficiently long day's stage, we profited by the hint intended for those who posted by road in 'the good old times' when the iron horse was not.

Here I may remark we found 'Paterson,' though published so long ago, by no means out of date. Towns may have grown, the country in many respects have

MEASURED from HYDE PARK CORNER

LONDON to EXETER, CONTINUED TO THE LAND'S END.

THROUGH ANDOVER, SALISBURY, and DORCHESTER.

From L. End		From London	
176¾	DORCHESTER, before, Stinsford House, Lady *Susan O'Brien*; and at the end of Dorchester, Came, Lady *C. Damer*.		DORCHESTER, end of, Colliton House, Rev. *W. R. H. Churchill*; 3 m. beyond Dorchester, and at a distance, Wrackleford, *R. Pattison*, Esq.
	WINTERBORNE ABBAS, beyond, Bridehead, *R. Williams*, Esq.		LONGBREDY TURNPIKE, before, Kingston Russell, *William Swabey*, Esq.
	CHIDIOCK. Chidiock House, *H. Weld*, Esq.		TRAVELLER'S REST, beyond, at a distance, Loders Manor House, Lady *Nepean*.
	PENN INN, before, Rhode House, Sir *J. Talbot*.		BRIDPORT. Wake's Court, *unoccupied*; Mountfield House, *J. Gundry*, Esq.; and at 5 m. distance, Parnham House, Sir *W. Oglander*, Bart.
	AXMINSTER, 5 m. distant, the ruins of Colcombe Castle; and 3 m. beyond Axminster, at 1 m. distance, Shute House, Sir *W. T. Pole*, Bart.		AXMINSTER. Cloakham House, *J. Frampton*, Esq.; and 1½ m. beyond Axminster, Coryton House, *W. Tucker*, Esq.
	WILMINGTON, beyond, Sutton, late Mrs. *Fortescue*.		
171¾	Cross the river Froome		
	* *DORCHESTER*	119½	
	To Cerne Abbas 7¼ *m.*		
	London to * *CERNE ABBAS* 126¾ *m.*		
	To Sherborne 18 *m.*		
	To Yeovil 19 *m.*		
	To Crewkerne 22 *m.*		
	To Beaminster 17½ *m.*		
	to Wareham 18 *m.*		
	to Weymouth 8¾ *m.*		
	3 *m. beyond Dorchester,*		
	to Weymouth 8 *m.*		
	to Abbotsbury 5 *m.*		
	London to ABBOTSBURY 127½ *m.*		
	¼ *m. before Winterborne Abbas,*		
	to Weymouth 9 *m.*		
168½	Winterborne Abbas	124½	
164¾	Longbredy Turnpike	127¾	
	Traveller's Rest	131½	
	Entrance of Bridport,		
	To Beaminster 6 *m.*		
	*** *The traveller in a chaise, who has occasion to go from Bridport to Weymouth, by turning off on the right, about* 3¼ *m. before Dorchester, will save a change of chaise, a turnpike, and about* 4 *m. of distance.*		
161½	* *BRIDPORT*	134¾	
	To Beaminster 6½ *m.*		
	London to BEAMINSTER 141 *m.*		
158¾	Chidiock	137½	
154¾	Charmouth	141½	
	to Lyme Regis 1¾ *m.*		
152½	Penn Inn	143⅜	
	A little farther,		
	To Beaminster 13 *m.*		
	to Lyme Regis 3 *m.*		
	Hunters Lodge, *Devonshire*	144¾	
	to Lyme Regis 3½ *m.*		
149½	* *AXMINSTER*	146¾	
	To Crewkerne 13½ *m.*		
	To Chard 7 *m.*		
	to Seaton 8 *m.*		
148	Cross the river Axe Kilmington	148¼	
	to Colyton 3 *m.*		
	Cross the river Coley		
143½	Wilmington	152¾	
141¼	Mount Pleasant	155	
139¾	* *HONITON*	156½	

WILMINGTON, 4 m. distant, Netherton House, Sir *J. W. Prideaux*, Bart.; and at the end of Honiton, Bramble Hill, *C. Flood*, Esq.

WESTON. Coombe House, Rev. *T. Putt*; and 1 m. beyond, Pomeroy, The Misses *Putt*.

FENNY BRIDGES, 2 m. beyond, Cadhay, — *Chapple*, Esq.

ROCKBERE, beyond, Rockbere House, *Thos. Porter*, Esq.; and Rockbere Court, — *Bidgood*, Esq.; ¼ m. farther, Waterslade House, — *Force*, Esq.

HONITON'S CLYST, 2 m. distant, Bishop's Court, Lord *Graves*; and about 1 m. beyond it, at St. Mary Clyst, Winslade, *H. Porter*, Esq.; and Farringdon House, *J. B. Cholwich*, Esq.

HEAVITREE, 1 m. distant, Northbrook, *H. Seymour*, Esq.; and a little beyond, Wear, Lady *Duckworth*; close to which is Higher Newcourt, *J. B. Crewell*, Esq.

ADDERWATER, ½ m. beyond, Hurston, Rev. *J. Coles*.

TAP HOUSE, beyond, Fulford House, the seat of *J. B. Fulford*, Esq., to whose ancestors it has belonged since the time of Richard I. This is one of the most ancient mansions in the county, and yet retains much of its original character, though its appearance was greatly improved a few years since: it stands on rising ground, near an extensive sheet of water, and consists of a quadrangle, with a large entrance gateway, (surmounted by the family arms,) in which is a door leading to a small but neat chapel, still preserved in a perfect state. Fulford House suffered greatly

DORCHESTER, end of, Colliton House, Rev. *W. R. H. Churchill*; 3 m. beyond Dorchester, and at a distance, Wrackleford, *R. Pattison*, Esq.

LONGBREDY TURNPIKE, before, Kingston Russell, *William Swabey*, Esq.

TRAVELLER'S REST, beyond, at a distance, Loders Manor House, Lady *Nepean*.

BRIDPORT. Wake's Court, *unoccupied*; Mountfield House, *J. Gundry*, Esq.; and at 5 m. distance, Parnham House, Sir *W. Oglander*, Bart.

AXMINSTER. Cloakham House, *J. Frampton*, Esq.; and 1½ m. beyond Axminster, Coryton House, *W. Tucker*, Esq.

HONITON, entrance of, Holy-shut Cott, *unoccupied*; Ashfield House, Miss *Head*; Egland House, Mrs. *Elliot*; Abbots, Mrs. *Banister*; and Shaugh House, *unoccupied*; at 2 m. distance, Woodbine Hill, Miss *Graves*; and 4 m. distant, Wolford Lodge, Mrs. *Simcoe*. The house is advantageously situated on the southern side of a lofty range of hills, commanding some beautiful prospects; and near it, on a projecting hill, is a large triple entrenchment called Hembury Fort, supposed to have been a Roman fortification — A little beyond Honiton, Sion House, *D. Gould*, Esq.; and Tracey House, *H. B. Lott*, Esq.

WESTON. Weston Cottage, *S. Stephens*, Esq.; 1 m. beyond Weston, Oakfield House, *W. Cunnington*, Esq.; and Deer Park, *A. Shuldham*, Esq.; near which is Hembury Fort House, *unoccupied*.

FENNY BRIDGES. Feniton Court, *G. B. Northcote*, Esq.; beyond which is Corscombe House, *H. Wright*, Esq.; and 4 m. distant, The Grange, *J. Rose Deane*, Esq.; 2 m. beyond Fenny Bridges, Escot, Sir *J. Kennaway*, Bart.; Larkbear House, Major *Smith*; and Ridon House, *J. P. Mathew*, Esq.

ROCKBERE, beyond, Blue Hayes, *unoccupied*; and Brockhill House, Lieut. Gen. *Thomas*.

HONITON'S CLYST, beyond, at 170 m., Poltimore, Sir *G. Rampfylde*, Bart.

EXETER, 1 m. beyond, Haccombe, *W. Lee*, Esq.; and farther, Cleave House, *T. Northmore*, Esq.

Reproduction of a Page from Colonel Paterson's Roads
Edition of 1822 Edited by Edward Mogg.

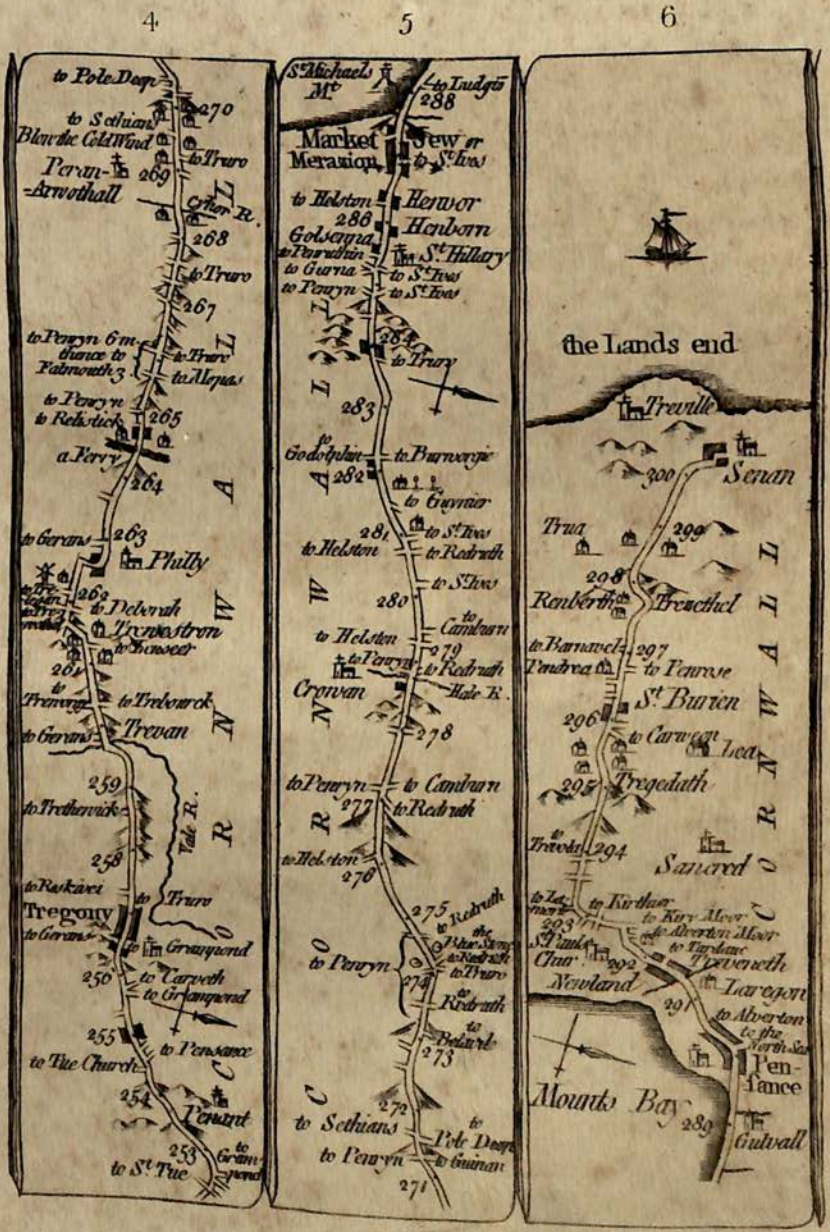
changed, railways have trespassed everywhere, but the old coaching roads are the same. 'Paterson' is the road traveller's 'Bradshaw,' but a far more interesting work, and, unlike the railway guide, not out of date every month. Fancy trusting (as we did 'Paterson') to a 'Bradshaw' sixty years old! 'Paterson's Roads' is the best work of its kind ever published, as far as I know, in any country or at any time. It was compiled in the palmy days of the coaching age, when roadside England was in the zenith of its glory. The book is a fairly compact one, wonderfully so considering the multiplicity of its contents; it gives all needful information—is explicit without being verbose. The separate roads are placed in columns and are easily traced; so clear are the instructions you can hardly go wrong even if you would; every bridge *en route* is marked by a small cut, the name of the river or stream being always stated. Each by or cross road is shown with an index hand pointing right or left as the case may be, with particulars as to its destination and all distances thereon. Besides all this there is provided a comprehensive list of hotels and hostelries in each town and village by the way. Surely a wonderful work altogether. You can follow in it a road all the way, say, from London to Glasgow, and find every toll-gate given (as they were then), each cross road diverging from the main one, all the inns, bridges, rivers, and even tiny streams, with a short but sufficient account of anything of interest on the way, printed on the right or left of the road column.

So conservative is rural England, that even to this day we found the names of the hotels and little roadside hostels with few exceptions still the same as given

in 'Paterson' more than half a century ago. If 'Paterson' said, 'Westhampton, Red Lion,' it was about ten to one that we should find the inn there with the same old title; probably the veritable curiously carved antique 'lion' that has done duty for so many years, has outlived so many changes, has known so many owners, still as young and fresh as ever, rejoicing in a new coat of paint. The very large majority of the hotels we stayed at were those mentioned by our trusty guide.

Speaking of the titles of these old inns, it may be worthy of remark that, as far as we could judge (our estimate being formed upon many thousands of miles of travel extending over many years), the Red Lion is out and away the favourite title; perhaps double the number of this popular sign exist over any other single one; the White Hart, I think, comes next, and is followed some distance behind by the King's Head and sundry differently coloured Lions, Bulls Blue and Black, Green Dragons, Crowns, White Horses, and so forth. Pleasant old-world titles, all suggestive of homeliness and comfort, and of our port-wine-loving, 'Hail, fellow! well met,' ancestors. Peace be to their ashes!

Leaving Weymouth, we passed by many pretty lowly cottages, some sweet scented with clinging honeysuckles and clambering roses, the perfection of picturesque dwellings, speaking of contentment and peaceful abiding; so at least they appeared to us. Possibly we idealised the reality, and saw only the bright side of the medal; misery and trouble, death, and the hundred and one ills that flesh is heir to, come to a picturesque ivy-covered Gothic cottage, as well as



Reproduction of half a Page from Thomas Kitchin's "Post Chaise Companion" Published 1767

to an ugly square brick box of a building. But for all that, it seems to me, life must be brighter for such pleasant environments, even sorrow more easy to bear amid lovely surroundings than where all is cold and unsympathetically bare, or where show more than comfort is the chief consideration. Were I a poor man, one of those humble cosy-looking cottages would be my choice, rather than a treeless, grassless, prospectless town habitation :

> Mine be a cot beside the hill :
> A beehive's hum shall soothe my ear ;
> A willowy brook, that turns a mill
> With many a fall, shall linger near.

Wealth is not synonymous with happiness ; riches bring anxieties. The happy unattainable medium is best ; but who is ever satisfied with the golden mean ?

It was a homelike, liveable, loveable country, through which we passed that day, a restful land, with many pleasant dwellings scattered every here and there, homes with tree-shaded lawns, and gay fragrant flower-beds, scenting the air with their mingling perfumes—a poet's ideal land, where sorrow would seem to have no place. We took a rosy view of life that day ; such sunny memories are pleasant possessions, mind-impressed pictures that nothing can rob us of.

It appears to me in this present age, when so many people reside in towns, we have, owing to this very cause, lost much of the old home feeling of our ancestors. Possibly railways, having made locomotion easier and cheaper, have something to do with it. Ask in the country, and you will find it no uncommon thing that one family has resided, father and son, for generations back in one spot. The home has grown what

it is during that time. Men learn to love and to take a pride in that which has belonged to their forefathers before, and they hope will belong to their children after them. In towns matters unfortunately stand on a different footing; there, no place knows us for long, we are ever on the move from one abode to another. Fourteen years is a lengthened sojourn for a Londoner in one house. And then localities change, the fashionable of to-day is deserted by the fortune of to-morrow; there is consequently none of that genuine old-fashioned home feeling bred in the country of long-continued residence and ownership. Town houses always appear to me as though they were only built for a time (as in fact they are, just to last the ground lease out), thus they never can suggest the downright unmistakable home feeling of a country house, where each tree seems to possess an individuality, perchance some tradition, and where every alteration in the building helps but to continue its history, to call up some associations of the past, or to reveal certain episodes in the life of bygone owners—a history ever added to as the years roll by. Links all these, connecting the past with the present, which itself in time will be the past. Such old places seem to be rooted to the soil, to grow from, not to be merely raised upon it.

We passed on the right hand Maiden Castle, one of the largest, if not the very largest, ancient earthwork fortification in England extant. This crowns boldly a projecting hillside. It must have been a strong work in its day, still possessing a treble fosse, with ramparts in some places as much as sixty feet in height, inclosing altogether upwards of forty acres, and with the surrounding entrenchments considerably over a hundred,

The bank sides are steep, and the entrenchments are skilfully connected with each other. No ordinary barbarians could have planned and carried out this by no means despicable engineering feat, one that even now could readily be converted into a formidable stronghold, though it is probably at least two thousand years old according to the best authorities, for of course on this question, like every other of a similar and uncertain nature, the highest opinions differ; any way, it is undoubtedly of anterior date to the Roman occupation.

This grand work has outlived its history. Since it was first raised centuries and centuries ago—who can say how many ?—mighty feudal castles have arisen and crumbled to decay; yet it still remains, a mysterious relic of the unknown past, grass-grown, but otherwise much as it was in the prehistoric days of old. Earth mounds, as so many of the ancient barrows prove, are the most lasting memorials man can place upon our mother earth, the pyramids possibly alone excepted.

It may seem a very far-fetched idea indeed, but it reminded me—on, of course, a much smaller scale —of some of the curious circular formations in the moon, which certain famous astronomers of olden time attributed to artificial agency; this bold opinion has, however, of late years been entirely given up in favour of volcanic agency, though where all is uncertainty everything is but conjecture. But still, so strangely repeated, apparently so perfectly round are these, so different to any natural feature on earth, they certainly suggest to the casual observer the idea of design rather than chance; but as astronomers mostly agree (not all) that there is no air in moonland, it is difficult to

imagine any inhabitants upon it, intelligent or otherwise. There is nothing that affords me greater interest than from time to time to pay a visit to our world companion by telescope, and with its magic aid to wander silently and alone amongst the wonderful and stupendous mountain scenery of another planet!

But, after this roving into space, to return to sublunary affairs, we had a pleasant drive on to Winterbourn Abbas, a small pretty country village, where we made our midday halt.

In an old country like England, where the towns and villages have grown, as it were, rather than sprung suddenly into existence, the names have come naturally; each place, with but few exceptions, tells something in its title which, to antiquaries at any rate, it is interesting to trace back to its origin. Nearly all names are derived from some local cause or peculiarity, have their rise in something connected with them: as in Oxford, which explains itself; Newstead, Woodstock (stead and stock being Anglo-Saxon for a dwelling place); Midhurst (hurst, a wood); Launceston, literally Lan-cesterton, that is the church-castle-town; and so on. Others there are whose origin is more difficult to trace, and often on that account is it the more interesting to discover their descent. How different is all this to the curiously titled towns of new America, where names have been invented or given to places without rhyme or reason; therefore one associates nothing with them, for they tell of nothing. It is strange, for instance, when travelling in that country to hear such names as Troy, Homer, Athens, Palmyra, Virgil, Utica, London, or Paris, the last two actually situated upon the Thames and the Seine. How ridiculous such sound!

They will reveal to future generations—nothing. Nor are the terribly prosaic titles of Smithsville, Eastcity, Johnsontown, Mechanicsville, Bigbend, Muddycreek, more appropriate. How much better the old Indian names would have been, for they had a meaning, their nomenclature expressed something connected or in harmony with the spot, as Niagara, Chicago, Yosemite, and others. The Americans of the future must be grateful for the comparatively few of these that have been retained.

The name of our small village struck us as being uncommon, and therefore we sought for its origin, thinking that in all probability we might gather some interesting information thereby. Nor were we altogether disappointed at the result of our investigations. It appears from inquiries we made to have arisen from a local peculiarity, namely a spring which only flows in the winter. The chalk hills around are filled with strange hollows, which absorb the water in the summer time; during heavy winter rains or melting snows, however, these become surcharged and overflow.

Near to Winterbourn Abbas is one of those mysterious remains that have puzzled so many learned men as to the cause of their erection, a stone circle, which may or may not have been raised by the Druids of old. It is but a small one, only some thirty feet in diameter, consisting of eight monoliths, though called the Nine Stones. Possibly this number originally existed; if so, one has disappeared and left no trace behind, probably carted away for the repair of a local building in the dark ages of our land, when so many of our ancient memorials, castles, and ruined mansions, were treated as capital quarry grounds of ready-hewn

stone. Oh, those Goths! Of unknown antiquity are these relics of a people who had passed away, and of a worship (if designed for such) which was only traditionary when our first Saxon forefathers came into the land. Whether erected by the Druids or others, whether intended for temples, for lawgiving, for public meetings, or for other purposes, can now be never known; all things connected with them are an unsolved enigma. What was this England of ours like when this rude structure first came into being?

So far that day we had had an excellent road for travelling, but on leaving Winterbourn the landlord informed us that ahead it became very rough and hilly. However, for a time all went well, and we thought the landlord must have been drawing upon his imagination in thus describing it; but by degrees the country grew wilder, and at the same time the road grew rougher and rougher, stone-strewn with a pleasing assortment of all shapes and sizes. Indeed, it would have been too much of a compliment to have called it a road, it was more of a track across the bleak uplands, differing only from them by its curious collection of stones; green grasses were growing amongst these everywhere, and the whole was gradually going back to its original prairie state. In fact, where we could manage it, by preference we drove on the rough commonland on either side of the way, as the better driving, though bad was the best, for it was rather jolting work traversing the lumpy uneven hillocks of grass. What a change for the worse in fifty years! Now all is rough, neglected, and deserted, where erst was smoothness, life, and bustle; the easy ways have become hard for the nineteenth-century traveller.

It is a shame that so many of our once excellent highways should have fallen into such a disgraceful state. It seems to me that the Government should keep the old main roads, or see, at least, that they are kept, throughout in decent travellable order. In the days of the turnpikes, though the constant tolls added considerably to the expenses of a prolonged driving tour (I have paid as much as seven shillings in one day), and though the pulling up from time to time was a great annoyance, still one had the satisfaction of knowing that the roads were in fair order. In some things our progress has been backwards. In a certain district in Yorkshire, so terribly bad is (or was when we were there) the road between two small towns, that one of the inhabitants told me, had it been only passable, he should have much preferred driving between them, as then he was master of his own time, but as such was not practicable, he was forced to go by rail. This is not as it should be, however beneficial to railway shareholders; people ought not to be *compelled* to take to the iron way. Whilst on the subject of roads, I came the other day across a work written by an American describing a tour through England in the old coaching days, and this is what he says of them: 'It is worth an American's while to go to England, if for nothing but to see the splendid roads, and soft verdure of the fields. There is scarcely a turnpike road in the island that is not as smooth as a floor, and in many places I have seen men repairing them where it was impossible for me to discover a necessity for their doing so.' Would the writer could have seen our road that day! I 'guess' he would not have been so enthusiastic over it as he was those many years ago.

However, if the road was bad, the scenery was beautiful, and of the two I would infinitely prefer a bad road and fine scenery to the reverse way of things. The soil around was poor, unprofitable land from a farmer's point of view; but then the best land, agriculturally speaking, is not as a rule the most picturesque. There is a sympathetic charm about a landscape that tells of man, a humanised feeling that is very delightful; but land (æsthetically speaking) can be over-cultivated, man can become a good deal too assertive.

When such is the case I would rather have primeval nature without any human associations, than nature tamed and cramped, and parcelled out into square fields tilled to the uttermost.

All kinds of farming appear to be more or less a losing occupation now-a-days, and old-fashioned farming I fear the most so, though so pleasantly suggestive of rural delights. Unfortunately scientific farming, which is gradually taking the place of the simpler and more picturesque method of our forefathers, is the worst enemy to beauty in the country we have. Alas! that it should be so. To make the most of everything is the order, the very necessity, of our competitive times. He who lags behind is lost; but in making this most of everything, how often do we not cause discomfort to our neighbour, and turn the delightful into the desolate.

Our road led us upon high ground, to the top of a strange elevated upland, bright and bare, swept unrestrainedly by the winds of the open sky, which are never at rest up there. The air was life-giving; the horses sniffed at it, and appeared to glory in its tonic freshness as much as we did ourselves. On either side of us was a far-extending country, miles upon miles of beauty

lying spread out beneath us, bounded only by the circling blue of the distance-dwarfed hills, and above by the infinity of space. No words could do justice to the loveliness of the panorama—language has its limits.

High up, like the sea when viewed from above, was our horizon. An ocean of palpitating atmosphere was between us and it, filling earth and sky with its silvery brightness. We seemed to see, to feel the air; we were conscious of its existence, it was not a lightless nothingness to us. How tenderly softened everything was by it. What a sense of space, pure space, and of fetterless freedom, these vast unfolding prospects afford —how much grander the world appears when viewed from such a vantage ground. How the eye rejoices to range without let or hindrance over so illimitable an expanse. How glorious it is to watch the fleeting ever-changing lights and shadows, brightening and darkening the landscape as they race over it. Now one spot is all in gloomy shade; anon a ray of sunshine rests upon it, causing a stream before unseen to glisten and gleam like a ribbon of winding silver; then, as it travels on, revealing a remote village, a nestling farmstead with fat-looking ricks around, an old grey church spire peeping above the surrounding woods, all in turn to be lost in envious shade. What a wonderful changing diversity of lights and shadows, what colour contrasts, what subdued harmonies, what revelations and vanishings, in all this.

Small blame to artists for so seldom attempting panoramic pictures. They are, excepting perhaps the sea, the most difficult things to paint. Such scenes are to be felt, not described. No words, or words and brush together, could ever give more than a faint realisation of

such a glorious reality. These can only suggest, the imagination must come to their aid. Only the outline, filled in more or less, according to the fallibility of man, can be given; the mind so far led, must conjure up the rest. So skilful painters of such subjects—when they do attempt such a task—never strive after the impossible, they simply suggest what they cannot represent, allowing the observer, possibly half unconsciously, to fill in the void. They give mystery for the eye to unravel, which if educated does its part, trained by what it either knows, expects, or fancies should be there.

To suggest all this is art indeed; to endeavour to paint it all is a waste of time and material; you might as well try to paint each leaf of a tree, each blade of grass in a field, each pebble on the shore. It cannot be done. Such things must be generalised, suggested; were you to try to do otherwise, your picture, instead of being more real, would be like nothing on earth, or probably out of it. Imperfect perfectness is not a thing to be desired or sought after. We cannot represent all things as they are, only as they seem.

It is one thing to preach, another to practise; this wandering into the realm of art arose through my attempting to do exactly what I have stated is not to be done. The result was time wasted, a sketch lost, and temper ruffled; whereas, had I striven for the possible, I might have secured a pleasing memento of a portion of the scene to have taken home with me.

Our rough road continued for some miles straight along the top of that singular raised hill; by-ways even worse than ours, and bridle-paths, led from the summit every now and again to the right and left of us, to sundry sleepy forsaken-looking hamlets in the vales

below. At last the long-looked-for and much-desired descent commenced, and then the surface of the road improved, but to make up for this it became very hilly. Pushing his machine wearily up one of the steep rises we met a tricyclist, looking very hot and tired. 'How long before the road gets better?' he demanded of us; 'this is jolly hard work, and I've had about enough of it.' We replied he would have to proceed some miles before there was any improvement in the way, and that before that desirable consummation took place he would have a good deal worse ground to travel over. At which remark he laughed and said 'we were making fun of him, as the road could not get worse to be a road at all.' Could it not? We wondered if he would still hold to that opinion when the stone-strewn portion came. The wheels of our phaeton had got the paint chipped off in places, and otherwise showed evident signs of the badness of the way.

After leaving our tricyclist, we continued on our journey till we found ourselves driving along the monotonous and exceedingly uninteresting street leading into the long-drawn-out town of Bridport. Bridport may have its good qualities, but they certainly do not consist in outside show. The towns in the South of England contrast pleasantly with those in the North, in the general absence of large manufactories and resultant smoke-laden atmosphere; the rivers are not defiled and turned into an inky nastiness—they are as a rule sunny, clean, and picturesque; but Bridport is an exception.

Though not prepossessing in external appearance, our hotel here internally was all we could desire: comfortable and clean, the food was well cooked, the

waitress and landlady patterns of civility, and moreover—an excellent moreover—the bill was moderate. Perhaps it was because the place was so depressingly uninteresting, that our inn within seemed so pleasant by contrast; its virtues were doubtless magnified in relief from so much ugliness. Be that as it may, we took away with us a very pleasant recollection of our short sojourn beneath the sign of the Bull at Bridport.

CHAPTER VIII.

A hilly County—Charmouth—An Anecdote of Charles II.—How History is sometimes ready made—A Story of our Road in the old Coaching Days—Tales of the old Times—Ancient Hostels—A Tunnel on the Way—Dorsetshire Distances—The Value of Ostlers' Information—Axminster—A finished Town—Churchyard Inscriptions—An uncharitable Epitaph—The Way to Gain Health—Nature's Revelations—Grotesque Trees—A splendid Prospect—Guideless Wandering—Undiscovered Britain—A Sunset—A deserted Cottage—Travelling in the Past and Present—England of To-Day and the Long-Ago.

WE were up and on our way betimes next morning. Bridport had no attractions to detain us; and as the day promised to be hot, we deemed an early start advisable.

Dorsetshire is a wild hilly county, a county of glorious purple distances and beautiful scenery—how hilly or beautiful, only those can tell who have driven through it. I have often wondered why this portion of England is so little appreciated. We are all well acquainted with the beauties of Derbyshire, Devonshire, Yorkshire, and other favoured counties. Dorsetshire is in its way equally lovely. Its wild downs, spreading heaths, and fine coast scenery, do not deserve to be so comparatively neglected and unknown. Hidden here and there within its borders are quaint villages, with curious old churches, ivy-clad ruins, secluded wooded glens, old manor houses, well worth exploring; and

moreover now and again comfortable rural hostelries are to be found, whose moderate charges prove the absence of the genus tourist. But I must confess the roads are not encouraging for driving, though right enough for the pedestrian, being often rough and nearly always hilly.

"A pleasant drive, though one entailing a good deal of stiff climbing and equally steep descents, brought us to the romantic little village of Charmouth, situated in a sheltered vale, hill-surrounded, and shut out from the bustle and turmoil of the great world. How well even now I can picture the little unpretending inn there, at which we pulled up to give our horses some gruel and a short rest, and where, in the grateful cool of its tiny cosy parlour, I indulged in a glass of clear sparkling nut-brown home-brewed ale. How delightful was that refreshing draught! I would not have exchanged it then for the choicest wines of foreign lands, rare though the vintage might have been.

It was here in 1651 that Charles II. had a narrow escape from capture. It had been arranged that a small coasting vessel should lie off Charmouth, in readiness to receive the royal fugitive, on a certain prefixed day. Unfortunately it was detained by adverse winds, and when the king in disguise arrived, accompanied by Lord Wilmot and Colonel Wyndham, the ship was not at hand. There was nothing for it but to make the best of a bad job, and so the party put up at the small inn for the night, in the hope that by the morning the vessel might come in sight.

The king's horse it was found had cast a shoe, and to be prepared for all eventualities, and in case a sudden flight should be deemed necessary, the village

smith was sent for. Now it happened that this individual (who had been a Parliamentary trooper, and was a staunch Puritan) noticed that the horse was shod not as was the custom in those parts, but in accordance with the method then in vogue in the North of England. The arrivals had already caused some stir in the place, suspicions as to who they might be were aroused, and the smith at once communicated the fact of the peculiarity of the horse's shoes to the justice of the peace. Strange this different way of doing things in various parts of the old England of the past, this sturdy individuality. Often to cross the border of a county then was, as it were, to go into another land. But *nous avons changé tout cela* ; a monotony of slavish uniformity now reigns supreme. By lucky chance, the prince's companions, getting wind of what was going on, managed to get him safely away. It must have been an exciting time for the poor hunted fugitive—so nearly escaping, and so narrowly avoiding capture instead. The quaint old inn has long since been converted into a cottage, but the little low humble room in which Charles II. slept is still shown, also the place in the chimney where, as a matter of precaution, for a time the king lay concealed ; this is entered now by a door. A gentleman who had visited the spot some little time ago told me that the worthy old dame who showed it to him said, 'Either Henry VIII. or George II. hid himself up there, but I isn't very sure which'! This is one of the many cases that go to prove the inestimable value of guide-bestowed information.[1] Disagreeable as it is to

[1] Shortly after writing this, I copied the following paragraph from the *St. James's Gazette*, which speaks for itself as to the value and reliability of guides. 'The room shown in Ecclefechan as the one where Carlyle

be hurried, show fashion, by one of these beings from one spot to another, it is even more annoying to have to listen to their trumped-up stories and ready-made traditions. True, in some instances, for example in the above, the absurdity of their apocryphal tales is readily discoverable, but it is by no means always so. Some of these are truly crude enough affairs at first, but they frequently improve by age; the tradition in its embryo state is a very different thing from the same article a few years older. One antiquary after another discovers flaws in the original history; these the trustworthy guide carefully notes and profits by; from the really valuable knowledge thus obtained, he forthwith alters and amends his particulars. This process goes on from time to time, till the tradition in its much improved and revised state will bear the strictest examination; indeed, the chances are, it has been so crucially criticised by excellent authorities, and so carefully expurgated of all improbabilities and impossibilities, as to appear more like truth than truth itself.

I have reason to believe, indeed, that a certain guide-book writer, some few years ago now, having in the course of his investigations had related to him a number of these doubtful legends, credibly received them for gospel, and honoured them with print. Now as such 'facts' are not unfrequently borrowed by the compilers of such works from each other, one

first saw the light, and in which Americans shut their eyes to dream of his baby-cot, is merely so exhibited by the present inhabitants of the house to suit their own convenience. The other room, as they sometimes explain—namely the real birthplace—is full of odds and ends, and too small besides to make a good show room So the larger one has been "promoted."'

has a little insight into the manner in which history is sometimes made.

Leaving Charmouth, we again had a deal of collar work; in truth, our whole day's stage was either mounting or descending long and often steep hills; but this very fact gave us glorious and extended prospects ever and again as we gained the various summits. And then this had been an old coaching road, and so the gradients, though severe, were well engineered; but it *had* to get over the hills, and very trying it must have been for the 'cattle' when the mail was loaded and the going heavy.

Terrible work in the winter, when the snow was thick on the ground, as the ostler said. At one particular hill, he informed us, as many as eight horses were required to 'get through' with. But the mails did not always get through. One bleak stormy winter night, the snow falling hard and drifting as well, it is recorded that the mail arrived late but safely at Charmouth, with but a single fare bound for Exeter. It was dark and freezing hard, the weather was most inclement, and the passenger declined to proceed farther, so he alighted at the inn for the night. It was fortunate for him that he did so. But the mails had to go on. Out into the white world, out into the blinding snow, out into an Egyptian darkness of gigantic gloom, fronting the pitiless raging storm, the coach proceeded. Fighting its way, ploughing through the deep drifts, struggling slowly, it still crept onwards. The men had their duty to do, and they did it, but there was danger in the task. It was their business: they faced the risk without a chance of glory. Peaceful heroes they, but heroes still.

Some miles on, at the top of a hill, the coach came to a standstill, and was soon snow-bound; it could neither proceed nor turn back. Leaving the guard in charge of the mails and horses, the driver essayed to return to the village for help. A vain endeavour; he lost his way and nearly his life. Benumbed, and half-frozen in his contest with the bitter biting north-easter, not knowing where he was or whither he was wandering, eventually he observed a solitary light gleaming through the darkness, and towards this he clambered over hedges and fields. The welcome beacon led him to a farmhouse. The farmer, duly aroused and informed of the state of affairs, got some of his labourers together, and went in search of the snow-bound coach. The bewildered driver could give but little information as to its whereabouts, and the task of discovery was no easy one. The party shouted and shouted again and again, but their voices were almost drowned by the howling winds, and deadened by the falling snow. They stopped to listen from time to time, but no answer came back to them; or if it did, it was lost in the louder voices of the storm fiend.

It was not till early dawn that the half-buried coach was discovered, wreathed round with deep snow drifts. At once a loud cry was raised, as the relieving party hurried forward. No response. The poor guard and helpless horses were frozen to death.

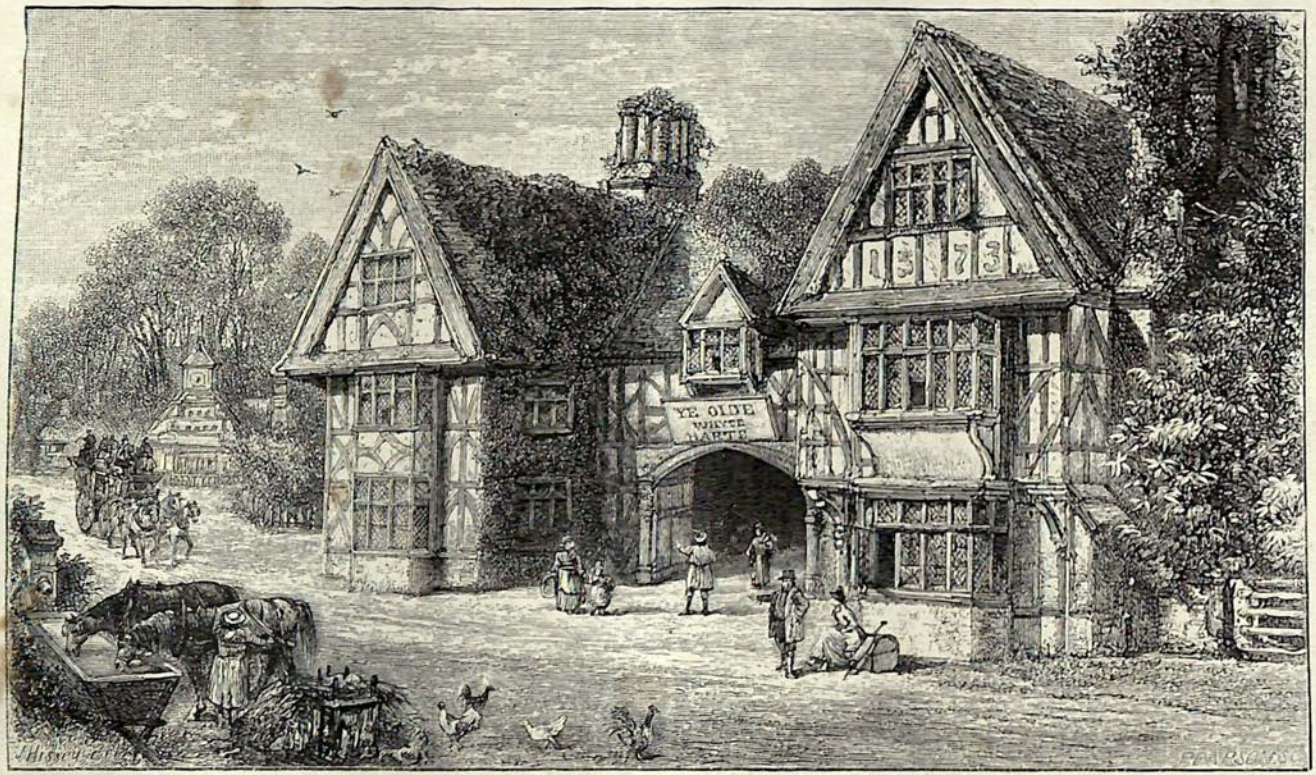
So the good old days of coach travel had their dark side, a very dark one sometimes. Exhilarating as driving across country was in fine weather behind a fast-galloping team, with the many varying incidents of the road and the coachman's ready jokes and racy anecdotes to enliven the journey, it must

be remembered it was not always summer or fair weather.

Such legends and stories of the old coaching days still abound, and may be picked up by the traveller by road at the many ancient hostelries which yet remain dotted over our forsaken highways. These have been handed down from sire to son, losing possibly in accuracy by each succession of tellers. The days must come when these traditions will altogether cease, or become so fabled and blended with romance as to be of little value. It would be well if whilst yet they linger some one would collect them for us, crystallise and embody them in more permanent print. There could hardly be a better method of securing these, than by driving leisurely along the old coaching roads, staying when possible at each of the old coaching inns on the way, making friends with the various landlords and ostlers, and gathering from them the willingly given information. Ostlers as a rule are of a communicative disposition, are fond of gossiping; and if by good fortune one runs against one of the right sort, whose father perchance drove the mail in or out of the place, a good listener will be well rewarded by hearing all he has to say. Many a pleasant hour have I spent in the deserted courtyards of the numberless old-world hostelries we have put up at from time to time during our wanderings on wheels, chatting with one of these old-fashioned ostlers, listening with great interest to his long-winded but entertaining histories of the past days of road travel. Going with him over the tumble-down rambling outbuildings, in which he would point out to me the various stables where the mail change was kept, the harness rooms, the postilions' quarters,

and the posting offices, I have gathered thus some idea of the internal economy and departed glory of the place.

Most of these old inns religiously preserve their traditions; but as time flies, landlords change, fresh faces take the place of the old ones, the new comers are not always in true sympathy with the past. They know little of it, possibly care less, and maybe they alter and change the ancient hostel beyond recognition. Will not some one with time and opportunity secure the old stories, anecdotes, and particulars of the past for us ere it be too late and they are lost for ever? Each year gone by without this being done, is valuable time thrown away, never to return. The lingering race of old coachmen and ostlers is fast dying out, those that have the story to tell are becoming fewer and fewer, and in the near future there will not be any left. I have been almost tempted to undertake the love task myself, but feel by rights it should fall into worthier hands than mine, those who can do better justice to the subject than I could ever hope to. Many books on coaching have, I know, been written, but what little has been done only shows to those who have had much experience of the road, how much more remains to be told of those cherished days of old, days dear to all lovers of the old England of the long ago, of the times when the gay coaches with their well-bred fast-travelling team, scarlet-coated guards and characteristic coachmen, were everyday objects, and when the well-kept highways of our tight little island everywhere resounded with the rattling of the passing mails, the clatter of many hoofs, and the musical notes of the horn.



AN OLD-TIME HOSTEL.

The old roadside inns, relics of the coaching days, have a peculiar charm for me. They look perhaps even more picturesque in their semi-forsaken state than when in the heyday of their prosperity. They call up old associations, memories of a fondly loved past, with their spacious courtyards and outbuildings, their ample stabling, their old-fashioned chambers, their roomy interiors, and above all their natural look. There they stand by the highway looking proudly desolate, showing evident signs of having known better times. Many have been important posting houses, and with their high-pitched gables, quaint clustering chimney stacks, deep mullioned leaded windows, form delightfully picturesque irregular rambling structures, eminently suggestive of thrilling stories and curious traditions of the years gone by, whether they possess them or not. One can hardly look upon such edifices and not imagine that they have strange stories connected with them. Romance is writ upon their very walls.

But how forlorn now they seem, shorn of all their former glory, the stabling fast going to ruin, only a few stalls—out of how many—kept in repair for the little custom that still remains. These stables are frequently a scene of dreary desolation, a dismal melancholy sight, given up to inevitable decay, and going the way of all uncared-for things, rats and mice (half-starved) and cobweb-spinning spiders being the only inhabitants. Possibly nothing has been done to them since the last coach took its last change there. I am speaking of country hostelries now; in towns the stabling has been turned to different purposes, and not allowed as a rule to go to entire ruin. I have often

tried to picture these ancient courtyards as they were in their days of past prosperity, when not a blade of grass had a chance of existing on the paving stones now so green and moss-grown, and where, besides the many mail changes, post-horses stood ready harnessed, and post-boys were at hand night and day ready and prepared to proceed without a minute's delay at the sound of the well-known and oft-repeated 'Next turn.' Such were the inns of old; now chance travellers, farmers going or returning from market, commercial travellers, such few as still drive, occasional hunting men, give sufficient support to keep them in their latter evil days from altogether 'going to the dogs.' And now and again some stray tired cyclist begs a stall for his iron steed.

Who were the architects of these old inns? is a question that I have often asked myself; for though frequently they are plain structures without any special merit or demerit, still there are a very considerable number of some architectural pretence both externally and internally, and this, combined with a look of fitness for their purpose, speaks of no common designer.

Not a few of these old hostels have open galleries running round their upper floors, giving them a quaint and picturesque appearance, and to add to the effect they are often gay with flowers. These old-time buildings are delightful to look upon and pleasant to stay at during the summer months. In the winter, however, the galleries open to the weather must make them, one would imagine, somewhat cold; but then I also noticed many of these were provided with windows to fit in the arcades in that season, thus securing

warmth and comfort when necessary, and coolness and breathing space in the hot days of summer.

Some distance from Charmouth, at the highest point of the road, we entered a tunnel cut through the crest of the hill. This was the first we had passed through during our lengthened drives about Great Britain; indeed, we had till then no idea such a thing existed on the ordinary roads, we thought they were confined to the railways. Plenty of cuttings there are of course (but not tunnels), some both extensive and deep, such as the long one excavated through the chalk downs just the other side of Dunstable on the old Holyhead road going north. A vast undertaking in those days, which would be considered a great work even now, and one that tells plainly of the skill of that famous pre-railway engineer, Telford.

Our road led us through a sparsely populated country, and that day to us the Dorsetshire miles seemed very long ones. Speaking about distances, it is strange in the country how difficult it is to get trustworthy or definite information on this score. When by chance we did meet anyone of whom to ask how far it was to the next village or town, the reply generally came, 'A little over so many miles,' and it appeared frequently to me the 'little over' was as much as the miles. We were often reminded of the Scotsman's mile and a 'bittie,' the 'bittie' being more than the mile. Moreover, we discovered that the ostlers in this part of the world have curious ideas as to the nature of a level road. At Bridport that worthy individual informed us, in reply to our query as to what our stage ahead was like, that the road was a fairly level one. I can only say his ideas and mine as to the meaning of those

simple words vary considerably. In spite of his assurances our road turned out to be a very hilly one, and the hills were very severe.

Indeed, we found it of little use to rely on the information of the various ostlers in respect of the goodness, badness, or hilliness of our way. People's notions about hills vary according to the part of the country they live in. In the flat eastern counties any little rise does duty for a hill; indeed, upon one occasion when travelling there, we were informed that there was a severe one on our way, and we actually passed over it without having the remotest idea that we had done so, and kept wondering when the much-dreaded climb was coming, and we could not for a time make out how it was we arrived at the end of our stage without having encountered it. On the other hand, in really hilly counties—and, by the way, as far as the *roads* go, Dorsetshire is about the hilliest in England—so accustomed are the inhabitants to the ups and downs, that they think very little of such things, and a fairly good road (as to surface) they call a level one. Therefore, as in our case, the innocent traveller is somewhat astonished at the hilliness of a level road.

Axminster, which we reached about midday, is one of those old country towns that seem to flourish in a quiet way without any visible trade or commerce to account for its homely prosperity. It is, moreover, one of those very few places that appear to be completed for ever, and possess no eyesores in the shape of rugged outskirts. It is neither ambitious nor enterprising, not a spreading town swallowing up each year so many green fields; it is wisely contented to be what it is. The very feeling it gave us of finishedness was

a delightful one, so contrasting with the great, ever-growing, restless, never-finished city we live the best part of our lives in. I would all country towns were like this, though I suppose the political economist would tell me it was a very foolish wish.

Here we had for the first time this journey a large jug of thick Devonshire cream with our midday dinner. Fancy the landlord of a London hotel treating his guests in this manner; but in most of the rural inns in Devonshire we were thus indulged—never, I need hardly say, in the few showy modern ones we were forced occasionally to rest at.

Close to our inn was an old churchyard; into this we wandered, and spent some time pondering and puzzling over epitaphs, trying to decipher the ancient inscriptions upon the tombstones, tracing as well as we could the quaint time-worn and moss-grown lettering on the headstones which still stand or rather lean over the unremembered and uncared-for dead. A somewhat difficult and doleful amusement spelling slowly out these half-illegible records of frail humanity. Still occasionally one is rewarded in so doing by coming across curious epitaphs and strange grotesque records of bygone generations. In one place during our researches we discovered that a poor man had been buried upon the 31st of April! but as to how this wonderful feat was accomplished we were not enlightened. At an old village church at Uffington in Berkshire we came across an inscription to a lady, which, after holding up the deceased as a paragon of moral excellence, quaintly concludes, 'If there were any virtues which she did not practise, they could be only such as (*sic*) those with which she was not acquainted.' What a perfect

creature she must have been! If the underlying dead could only arise and read some of the glowing elegies written upon their monuments, would they know themselves, I wonder?

In one of the eastern counties we noticed the following brief but touching memorial to a child:

ALICE.

Who pluck'd this lovely flower?
The Master.
The gardener held his peace.

When we are dead, our virtues only seem to live. Judging from the monumental inscriptions, what a wonderfully virtuous people our ancestors must have been, even though history may state otherwise. If one could only credit all the churchyard literature we read, we could but conclude that the world has gone back. But then does not Byron cynically remark, 'Believe a woman or an epitaph'? Only once have we, so far, come upon a really malicious or uncharitable inscription, and this we found in the little peaceful churchyard at Lyndhurst of all spots in the world, which I forgot before to mention. Upon the simple gravestone—a very plain one—under the name of the deceased, cut in large Roman capitals, so that he who runs may read, is the following line, 'BE SURE YOUR SINS WILL FIND YOU OUT.' What were the poor man's sins, we wondered, and what manner of man was it who caused this vindictive inscription to be engraved? Spite that will follow a man to his grave is not pleasant to think about. The dead with all their faults should be allowed to rest in peace, and their misdeeds (if any) be lost in oblivion.

Glancing at the names of those who 'shuffled off

this mortal coil' long centuries ago, it is strange to remark how often in such places the same names are still owned by the living around.

Somehow that old churchyard depressed us; its shaded gloom was oppressive; for gloomy it was even on that sweet summer day, gloomy in spite of the cheerful sunshine, the bright blue sky above, and the rejoicing songs of birds around. We were not sorry to leave this sad colony of graves, in the midst of which the grey antique fane rises up so solemnly, keeping ever faithful watch over those sleeping so silently in the hallowed soil beneath.

Curiously enough, the road here went straight through the courtyard of our hotel (not the public highway which went round it), so that in the old days the coach would drive right in and change horses there, entering at one side and leaving at the other. We had never observed this uncommon but highly convenient arrangement before. Possibly the position of our inn, at the corner of two streets, had something to do with it, more a case of accident than design. Such things prove how chance may suggest ideas.

After our mournful wanderings in the melancholy churchyard, it was a positive relief once more to remount the phaeton and to get away into the gladsome sunlit country; and quickly again our spirits rose as we found ourselves bowling along a capital road, past daisy-dotted meadows, and by the silvery fishful Axe, greeted by the balmiest of breezes fragrant with the perfume of new-mown hay. I know of nothing more sorrow-dispelling, or better calculated to chase away any depression of spirits, than a drive on a sunshiny day through a pretty country. Under such pleasant

circumstances you feel bound to be light-hearted and to rejoice when all around you is so joyous, so peace-bestowing.

I cannot imagine anything more soothing or more restful to the overwrought brain than a driving tour through some pretty country, free from time-table bondage and the many minor but real worries of ordinary travel. And there is such a delightful feeling of repose and calm in English pastoral scenery, an undisturbed serenity, a quietude that is indescribable. It is a good thing for the lovers of the picturesque that there are ample portions of our land unblessed with coal fields and iron deposits.

The curative effects, to those in ill-health or over-worked, of being so long in the open, inhaling all day long so much fresh air, are by no means slight, nor lightly to be esteemed: I doubt if in all the world a finer tonic could be found than such a journey as ours afforded. A famous author, thoroughly out of health, who had tried all the continental spas in vain, was in despair, and as a last resource recommended by his physician to take his horse and gig and drive about the country, hither and thither, without any object, save to get as much fresh air without fatigue as possible, and to enforce idleness upon himself. The prescription was acted upon with the best of results, and he who took it described his trip as 'the most enjoyable episode of his life.'

Travelling as we did surrounded always by so much beauty, we had grown to love Nature as we never had before. Our whole drive was a revelation to us: we found rare charms in what was once only the common-place. We grew familiar with the wild flowers and

birds; even the wayside hedgerow, with its tanglement of thorns, brambles, dog-roses, and woodbines, was a storehouse of treasures for us, a picture in itself, every old church a history, a simple field full of wonders. Even the meek and lowly lichens and mosses we discovered to be marvels of beauty, rich in colours and lovely in forms. An old manor house or an ancient weather-beaten ruin was a never-failing fund of interest. Our imaginations were always at work. Even an old wall had its story to tell; and the more we observed the more we felt how full of untold loveliness was our little world. Every idle-growing thing, even the despised weeds, gave us something to think about. The greater as well as the smaller objects on our way were a source of never-failing delight. It were well were 'man and Nature more familiar friends,' for 'Nature never did betray the heart that loved her.'

Our whole drive, indeed, was to us a source of infinite delight; we never wearied of it for a single day, and I trow there are not many pleasures in the world of which this can be said. Perhaps some people may smile, and think we were too enthusiastic; but if we could extract such pleasures from our everyday surroundings, was it not our good fortune to be able to do so?

On to Honiton we had another plentiful supply of hills. My wife, who is Scotch, and accustomed therefore to mountain lands, remarked she thought that if Dorsetshire were rolled out it would make a very extensive county, and cover a great deal more space on the map, in which remark I quite concurred.

These hilly roads are invariably beautiful ones, and we would not have exchanged ours that day for the

most level way in the kingdom. Perhaps the horses would have differed from us in this opinion ; their *beau idéal* of scenery doubtless is a long level stretch of road with a town or a village in sight at the end, suggesting the possibility of a rest and a hearty meal of oats and hay.

The soil around was not rich, and the trees by the way often showed their roots, bare where the rains had from time to time washed away the earth, twisted and turned about in the search for substance, gnarled and bent into all manner of strange and fantastic shapes. Different people have different kinds of hobbies—excellent things in their way are hobbies, a man with a hobby seldom finds time hang heavy on his hands —a friend of mine had a rather uncommon one, a mania for cutting curious walking sticks. An old twisted root was a precious possession for him ; this secured, he would carve it into all sorts of queer shapes and forms, into strange heads with leering eyes, and nondescript creations of impossible animals, that never could have existed in this world, and would be most undesirable in any other—nightmares realised. For such a hobby what a temptation the plantations by our roadside offered !

Just when we thought there would be no end to the ups and downs, we found, much to our relief, that we had come to the end of our last climb. We had reached the top of a long tiresome rise, when suddenly, and as unexpectedly as suddenly, the land in front of us seemed as it were to drop down ; it was as though we had reached the end of the world ; but no, we presently discovered it extended for leagues and leagues beyond. Beneath us was a vast limitless landscape, a

kingdom in miniature with its cities, towns, hamlets, woods, fields and rivers, roads and railways too—a slumbering spreading panorama, strikingly impressive, lying all so still in the thick glowing quivering evening light—a prospect full of subtle colour harmonies, of gleaming golden lights and long low silvery blue shadows, miles upon miles of golds and greens and greys, and peaceful loveliness—a dream land rather than a world land—the landscape of a vision.

Involuntarily we pulled up entranced, it was all so unexpected. This was no guide-book-lauded, much-be-written land, with all its beauties carefully catalogued, show fashion, even the right way of approaching them described, so that you know all that is coming, and are consequently ever prepared and frequently disappointed. A natural sudden surprise, such as the one we experienced, enhances the effect of even the finest scenery. Fancy coming upon Niagara unawares! There is always a sentimental feeling of untold possibilities in the unknown; the mind can imagine much, and a great deal of the pleasure in this world comes from the imagination—the idealising of facts.

It is a good thing sometimes to travel guide-bookless; you may miss much by so doing, but you gain much also; a perfectly fetterless freedom is yours, you have overthrown a tyrant, you have the pleasure of self-discovery, such treasure-trove spots always possess a special and an individual interest. Above all you do not feel compelled to see everything, you are not bullied and worried in trying to compass all things. You may wish to go one way, it looks so inviting; but it is of no use, your guide book says positively no. So perforce you pursue the old beaten tracks directed—

you go with the stream; you thus miss the minor beauties, which if they find no favour in the writer's eyes (however lovely you might deem them), or have failed to become famous, are ignored. And often these very minor beauties are, to a lover of the picturesque—for its own sake, not for its renown—the most pleasing and unhackneyed.

Even in well-known Wales (and is there anywhere in Great Britain a better known holiday ground?) I have discovered nooks and corners, totally unknown or undreamed of by the ordinary run of travellers, quite as lovely as the more famous spots, some even more so, I fondly think—the pride of discovery of course goes for something, and I am allowing for that. At any rate, my most admired sketches have been from little heeded spots. 'Why,' remarked a gentleman to me one day, whilst looking over some of my drawings done in the Lake District, 'I thought I knew it by heart, but your sketches are a revelation to me of how little I know of its most charming scenes.'

Take for instance the tourist-haunted, artist-beloved Bettws-y-coed. The Fairies' Glen there is far-famed, and, alas! its fatal fame has spoilt its romantic seclusion; yet I know another glen within walking distance of the little village, equally fine in my opinion—of the two, I prefer it; still I have wandered there, painting, day after day, whilst the whole host of trippers passed by, and went and did the regular 'sights,' leaving me in perfectly peaceful seclusion, for which I was supremely grateful; but then *my* glen was not mentioned in any guide book, as far as I am aware, and most sincerely do I hope it never will be. Were such a most undesirable fate to happen to it, possibly, indeed most probably,

it would be fenced in, and a wretched charge for admission made. How I hate this making a peep-show of natural beauties, with gates to enter by *à la* Crystal Palace, with a fee of so much a head. The Yosemite even could not stand it!

Not always, however, had I this beauty spot quite to myself. Upon one occasion I found an artist there happily and busily at work before me. Deeming at first I was one of a vanguard of tourist sightseers, in anger, fear, and trembling, he asked me how I had discovered the place. Quickly I reassured him as to myself and that I had no followers, and we soon became capital friends, and continued our work of love together in undiscovered tranquillity.

But I have been sadly digressing. When I started this wandering discourse we were halting on the hill-top, with the fair land of Devonshire we were just entering spread out before us. Long we rested on that elevated spot, our eyes roving over the vast extent of ever-changing tints, for in the mystic gloaming form was lost in colour—ranging over all, from russet greens near at hand to the faint far-off blue, from mystery to mystery, till they were led away and away to where in the dim distance sky and land blended in a misty uncertainty, and even vaguely beyond—into an eternity of space!

The whole atmosphere, vapour-laden, colour-charged and colour-conveying, was filled with a soft subdued splendour. It was no void of airless vacuity. And bending tenderly over all was an infinity of solemn radiant sky, throbbing with sun-shafts, trembling with flashes of opal lights, delicate pearly gleams, and rays of silvery brightness, melting and blending

into a softened glory of indescribable tints, wonderfully, inconceivably lovely.

Such effects are, alas! but too fleeting and are only to be beheld in a moist climate, and from vantage heights in hilly lands, with a vastness of air space for the eye to penetrate. Then, as Turner found, no country in the world possesses such grand aërial effects as our own, such sky-scapes of glowing molten gem-tinted colouring, so varied and changeful. I make bold to say, astonishing and heretical though it may seem to some, that no country in the world can boast of such sky scenery as England. The glory of Italy is as nothing to it.

What a magnificent prospect that lonely hill-top afforded, grand even on an ordinary day, doubly glorious as we saw it. But fine though it may be—and truly we thought it well worth the many miles of our journey for that one superb scene—who ever sees it now? Our road was green and grass-grown, very rough and stony too, bespeaking its little use; in the valley is a smooth-going railway, who therefore would go by the hilly road? But railway travellers know nothing of such revelations of scenery. Just where Nature has made her masterpieces, the iron way as a rule either disappears in a gloomy cutting or loses itself in a darksome tunnel.

We passed a well-built comfortable-looking cottage on the hill-side, all neglected, deserted, and forsaken, too much out of the world possibly for anyone now-a-days to live in (hermits are out of fashion), with no neighbours or passers-by to enliven its solitariness. Time works strange changes; the ancient houses by the once busy highway, that erst looked upon a gay spirit-



ON THE ROAD.

inspiring prospect, the ever-passing world of varying traffic, and resounded to the frequent cheery music of the horn, are very silent now, dreamily, drearily, depressingly so. Genuine travellers by road, as were we, are looked upon as rare curiosities, the last survivals of an extinct species, beings almost as scarce as post-chaises, and about as much of a wonder as was a locomotive in the early days of George Stephenson. Railways have ruined road travel; what we gain in speed and luxurious comfort, we lose in all things else.

Strange and contradictory though such an assertion may appear, it seems to me we have in this nineteenth century of universal progress far less facilities for travelling—to really see the country, that is—than existed in our grandfathers' time. Railways whisk us through the land, and we know little or nothing of the beauties, special charms, local peculiarities, varying features of interest, or ever-changing incidents of the country we pass through. Our forefathers, on the other hand, could go by coach almost anywhere or post by road, and thus they saw the country. Did we ever care to do so, we could not. The stage coach has departed, and post horses are no more, though on many of the old inns may still be read the legend, 'Post horses;' you might as well demand in such stewed sea-serpent, for one would be just as attainable as the other.

And what a difference there is between a road journey and a railway one—the one all speed, bustle, and ugliness; the other so peaceful, restful, and beautiful. I have often been struck, after having taken the railway from London to a certain town, and afterwards having driven between the same places, how little

knowledge of the country I had gathered during my first journey. How utterly different did it turn out from what I had expected. What appeared somewhat monotonous by rail, was in reality full of a wonderful wealth of beauty—a beauty, alas! unseen, unknown, and possibly never even imagined to exist by the present generation of travellers. Alone in its sweet seclusion lies all this loveliness, with scarcely one to see it; this magic of form and colour and space, and hardly any to heed it; this fairest of scenery, infinite in its charming variety, and so few to behold it. Unthought of, we pass all such scenes by now, riding behind an iron sulphur-and-fire-breathing monster. In a whirlwind of dust and steam and smoke, we dash with lightning speed through the fair land of which we know so little though it is our own; for the England of modern cities, and mushroom watering-places and their surroundings, is not the old England with its gathered centuries of beauty, its bloom of age, cherished associations, and stored-up loveliness of generations.

CHAPTER IX.

An old Coaching Inn—A curious Conveyance—Queen Elizabeth's Physician—'The fairest County in England'—An Artist's Paradise—Devonshire Cottages—Old-fashioned Flowers—A pleasant Land—Exeter and Cathedral—Guides—A beautiful Window—Ancient Monuments—The Restorer and his Works—Historic Buildings—Starcross—Exmouth—A sandy Waste—Where Danby, R.A., Painted—A Wayside Puzzle—Dawlish.

At Honiton it was our good fortune to come across another old-world coaching inn, for in past days this town was a famous centre of travel, and its hostelries were in good repute. In our hotel yard here we discovered in the course of our investigations sundry quaint vehicles, cumbrous and heavy, all of the olden time, relics of a bygone age; these contrasted strangely with our more modern phaeton. If any eccentric individual were to have one of these curious conveyances copied, and drive about the country therein, what a sensation he would make; almost as incongruous he would appear as a man walking down Regent Street in a suit of armour. Amongst these nondescript creations on wheels was one of more recent date than the others, but ancient still, rejoicing in a vigorous old age, and actually in daily use to convey her Majesty's mails to rural outlying parts beyond. It must have been repaired from time to time, like the good old barque which after years and years of a rough stormy existence, having had nearly every timber renewed,

was still the same old ship—in shape and name at any rate.

This antique two-wheeled affair interested us much; if it could only have related to us its life history, it would, I feel sure, have been an eventful one. Probably it was some squire's carriage at one time, and had descended in the social scale to its present useful but lowly estate. The body of the conveyance, by a most ingenious contrivance, slid backwards and forwards at the will of the driver, controlled by a lever; we tried the, to us, novel arrangement, and found it to work well and easily. Thus the position of the load was varied, according to the up or down hill gradients of the road, thereby easing the horse, and allowing him to make the best of his powers, adding moreover considerably to the safety of driving. This appeared to me to be a simple and excellent device, and we wondered it has not ere this been rediscovered and re-introduced in two-wheeled vehicles for hilly countries. In spite of the cleverness of our age, some old ideas are worth reviving.

Honiton is one of the order of long-streeted towns, and is consequently less picturesque than more compact ones. The houses, however pleasing in themselves, do not group well, they want compressing more together. We thought the place (as are most Devonshire towns) clean and neat, and there, to us, its attractions ended.

Wandering into the parish church, four hundred long years ago a priory chapel, we discovered an interesting black marble tomb, erected to the memory of one Thomas Marwood, physician to Queen Elizabeth, and who died at the good old age of 105. He appears to have performed an astonishing cure upon the Earl

of Essex, which brought him into renown, and gained him Court favour. He seems to have taken care of his own life.

We had now fairly entered upon Devonshire, 'the fairest county in England,' as it has been called, but such a saying is a libel upon many other lovely counties. Devonshire, however, with its tree-embowered leafy lanes, its rich red soil, grand coast scenery, sylvan glades, picturesque pastoral peeps, sparkling rivers, fishful trout streams, combined with the wild grandeur of Dartmoor and the glories of wind-swept Exmoor, possesses truly the charm of wonderful variety for a single county—a little England in itself.

Its climate, too, is as full of contrasts as its scenery. From the warm balmy air of Torquay, Dawlish, and the south coast generally, to the bracing tonic-giving atmosphere of Ilfracombe, and hilly Lynton with its mountain and sea breezes, all with a direct northern exposure, is a change indeed.

Fine sunshiny weather, as was befitting, welcomed us to this bright southern land. We awoke next morning early, not so early, however, but that the sun had the start of us, and was streaming in through our windows, bidding us rise and proceed upon our pleasant pilgrimage. Overnight we had had a long chat with the ostler, our conversation beginning with an inquiry as to our road for the morrow, and from things present we naturally and easily glided into things past, and many a story, that evening, we added to our store, of the old coaching times in these parts. It would seem our hilly stage of yesterday was, then, noted as being the hardest portion of the journey from Exeter and farther south to London; Shute Hill, one of the

worst on the way, being considered 'a teaser,' and with a heavy load and doubtful 'cattle' (for the horses were sometimes young and untrained, sometimes old and failing), it required careful negotiating. And here it was that mishaps occasionally occurred; generally, it must be confessed, at night, for then the oldest of harness and the most worn-out of steeds were put on, for, as we were told, 'anything that would go at all was good enough for night work, when no one could observe the manner of horses or the condition of harness.' And if there was a case, i.e. if anything went wrong, or an accident occurred, why of course it was the coachman's fault.

Upon one occasion, it was related to us, on arriving at Honiton the driver of the coach exclaimed to his box seat fare, 'Good job we're over that bit of road all safely; only three eyes amongst the whole lot of us, and two of those my own!' which meant of course the team were all blind save one single-eyed horse.

The bright sunny side of 'the good old times' is all we see now, the shadows of the picture are faded with age. We look to-day admiringly upon the excellent well-appointed 'butterfly' coaches that take us short and pleasant stages in the summer time—'butterfly' ones, but for all that most sportsmanly and workmanly turned out by skilled amateurs—and from these we conjure up an ideal coaching age. Delightful as the travelling was then with all its exhilarating excitement, it is as well to remember it had its prosaic and unpicturesque side. But time covers all things past with a glamour of romance; and who would have it otherwise?

'Beauty is as beauty does;' even the black begrimed locomotive is not unlovely to some. There is a certain

grandeur in the majesty and knowledge of its power, that has a charm of its own. I, who love it not, can still admire a steam engine for its endurance and strength, its wonderful mechanical ingenuity, altogether, I think, the most astonishing invention of man, though so common now; but for all that I cannot see beauty in ugliness as some profess to do. But is there anything in the world ugly or lovely that has not its admirers or apologists? Even the bleak black north-easter has found a poet in Kingsley to sing its praises. Herod, also, has been held up as an excellent ruler; and so too the unbeautiful iron steed has been the theme of verse as follows: fancy the unsightly locomotive being the subject of an ode!

The sculptured form is a noble thing, and the painting rich and rare;
And noble is the pillar'd aisle, with its arch raised high in air;
And the earth has a thousand noble things, that loud for praises call;
But the grimy engine, black with smoke, is as noble as them all.

Is it? Still, who can tell but that in some far distant day, when some other wonderful unimagined method of travelling may have superseded the slow railways, our descendants may sigh for the poetry and romance of the good old railway times? Almost anything seems possible in this world of change.

Once more 'under way' we trotted along at a merry pace, passing through a country quite idyllic, an artists' paradise—without the artists, however, it seemed to us, for nowhere could we catch a welcome gleam of their white mushroom-like umbrellas. This somewhat surprised us, for a more picturesque or paintable coun try there could not be. It has often puzzled me why artists should flock so to such well-known spots, beautiful

though they may be. Haddon Hall is perhaps the perfection of an ancient time-worn building, hoary with age and hallowed by tradition ; but one can have enough even of Haddon Hall. There are many other old historic halls and grey-walled antique homes every bit as worthy of the painter's skill, and that would have the charm of freshness to the spectator. And so with scenery, variety is pleasing. One grows a little weary of seeing in numberless galleries the same familiar scenes ; however beautiful in themselves, they become monotonous even in their beauty by such tiresome repetition. I take it the reason why artists follow so in one another's footsteps is, that the majority of them do not care or cannot afford to lose the necessary time required to hunt up 'fresh woods and pastures new ;' so they go to the same spots year after year, knowing that in them at any rate they are sure of subjects and suitable quarters, no light considerations these.

The air of Devonshire is delightfully pure, wind-swept as it is by the bordering ocean breezes, storm-washed as well from all possible impurities. It has a fragrant softness, a clearness, and a freshness that make simply existing in it a delight.

Its bright atmosphere is not polluted by the smoke of large manufacturing towns, nor are its rivers contaminated by their refuse—its streams are pellucid and beyond suspicion pure. All these things make this corner of England very charming to the lover of the unspoilt country. It may have been the knowledge of such—our fancies possibly had something to do with it—but as we journeyed on, it seemed to us the atmosphere was purity itself. The nearer woods, as well as the far-away hills, were distinct and

luminous, yet soft withal—a special quality of the Devonshire distances.

The air, too, that day, how fragrant it was—wild, warm, and sweet with the scent of clover and a hundred other blended odours. How green the fields looked, how contented the cattle within their rich pasturages, how self-satisfied they seemed, dreamily munching away or lazily looking at us over the gates, too indolent even to move at the sound of the horn. A lotus-eating land this!

How charmingly rural were the warm-tinted lowly roofed thatched cottages we passed by the way; genuine country cottages these, no make-believes of the modern builder, abounding in sham rusticity, and covered with chilly blue slates. To learn how picturesquely perfect a cottage can be, one must go to Devonshire. More often than not the cotter has a bit of garden attached to his humble dwelling; in this he takes a pride; the soil and climate are in his favour, so it is generally gay with old-fashioned flowers, which always to me look brighter and smell sweeter than the more favoured ones of grander homes. Perchance also a climbing rose or honeysuckle adorns the walls. And the thatch when old and time-tinted is full of a subtle harmony of colours, of reds and yellows, greys and browns, green with mosses, and golden and silvered with lichens—a study of rich quiet colour pleasing to look upon, pleasant to paint, but difficult to describe.

How musically too, as we proceeded along, sounded the slumbrous continuous rustling of the wind-stirred trees, rising and falling with the varying wind in a rhythmic cadence of sounds. How merrily the birds were chanting from thicket and bush, the lark loud

above all others, a speck of quivering rejoicing melody. Heart and ear and eye were gratified; the heart by the gladsomeness and brightness of all around, the ear by the many musical murmurings, and the eye by all the winsome bewildering beauty. There was, in spite of the luminous clearness of the atmosphere, no disagreeable glare of light, only a softened sunshine, a mellowed radiance everywhere. Surely, we thought to ourselves, as doubtless many others have thought before, surely Devonshire is in truth a very pleasant land.

If I would, I could not describe the loveliness of that road; brush and pen together would fail to do it justice. It was enough to drive a painter or a poet wild. Roads, like men and scenery, have certain characteristics, and friendly homeliness was that of ours that day. There was nothing especially grand, nor yet anything mean about it, but it possessed a quiet unpretending beauty, a simple attractive naturalness, that won our hearts. Almost every bend in the way opened up a new prospect, like yet unlike to what we had seen before, fresh yet familiar, ever changing still not strange. We could get no sketch simply because we were embarrassed by the endlessness of choice; we knew not where to begin when all around was so equally lovely. No sooner had we selected one spot and had determined to draw it, than others tempted us; allured thus from one point to another, each for the moment seeming the most promising, in sheer despair we packed up our painting paraphernalia and were obliged to be content with adding to our already goodly gallery of eye-impressed pictures.

About five and a half miles from Honiton, on the

left-hand side of the road, in a secluded nook, we came upon a modern wayside monument, raised to the memory (so the inscription upon it informed us) of Dr. Patteson, killed abroad in 1871. Why there and thus erected we could not quite understand. In the old days of road travel, when everyone who passed this way would have seen it, there might have been some little reason for thus placing it; now-a-days none. How many people know of its existence, how many pass by this quiet spot in the course of the day? I venture to say they might be counted upon the fingers of one hand; even, it may be, no counting would be required, at least to judge from our experience that summer morning, for until we neared Exeter we met not a soul, we saw no one, save the loafers about the villages (who cannot fairly be counted), not a solitary farmer, not a stray shepherd, not even the ubiquitous bicyclist.

Some of the most lonely places in England are the deserted coach roads. A Western American 'corduroy' track could hardly be more desolate, possibly less so, for wild animals do venture upon it, and there is some traffic, if there is no railway near. But if away from towns our old roads are very desolate, none the less are they beautiful, they are lovely in their very loneliness. Their peaceful quietness pleased us much; on them we felt we could really ruralise, and do as we liked; there was no one to quiz us. We could, all undisturbed, gather wild flowers, sketch, photograph (for we took a portable camera with us), go a-blackberrying, picnic by the wayside—this we did very often; upon many a green, moss-grown, and tree-shaded nook, trespass also, in search of the picturesque—this too we did frequently.

Notice boards we ignored, they were never meant for the harmless traveller. Only once did we get into any trouble by our repeated excursions upon other people's lands; but on that occasion by taking everything in good-nature we eventually made friends with the indignant enemy; fortunately it was the owner of the property we were roving over we came across, and not one of his gamekeepers or other servants, and the end of our little adventure was, he actually asked us into his house to lunch.

Exeter presently came in sight, of which we had a fine panoramic view. Unlike most such cities, the cathedral does not tower majestically up and assert itself over all the place, the very embodiment in stone of the olden ecclesiastical supremacy. On this account the distant view of Exeter is disappointing, and is in marked contrast with similar prospects of Canterbury, York, Durham, or Peterborough, forming as they do one of the most pleasing features of the English landscape. Nature and art in the most delightful manner combined the past and present in perfect picturesque harmony.

Driving on through the modern suburbs of Exeter, where the houses were all new and had their history to make, we reached the older part of the city, where the houses were more ancient and had made their history, and each seemed to possess an individuality, as unlike the peas-in-a-pod style of architecture of the present day as it is possible to imagine, of which latter London terraces supply such endless wearying examples; Gower Street perhaps bearing the palm for continued sameness.

As we wended our way cathedralward, we kept looking out for an hotel; surely in this ancient city, we

thought, we shall discover somewhere an old-fashioned one after our own heart. Nor were we disappointed. Reaching the close, we came across the very thing we were in search of. We drove up to it at once, feeling confident within ourselves, from outside promises, of cosy comfort within. Much experience of hotel hunting had made us good judges in this respect.

Our inn was indeed all that we imagined it would be, comfortable, unpretending, quiet. What more in praise of our hostelrie could I say? A place it was in which 'to take our ease,' where both landlord and landlady took an interest in, and saw after the wants of, their guests—a place that gave us an untold feeling of rest and home. Oh, the charms of these old-fashioned inns. Would there were more of them. How utterly unlike to many modern ones I wot of, with all their glitter, glare, and restlessness. Even the pleasant waitress seemed anxious that we should be in all respects satisfied, her attentions were not of the mere duty-paid order; whilst in addition to all this, the company we met appeared to fall under the friendly homely spirit of the place.

The guests in the coffee-room—we never indulged in a private sitting-room if we could help it—consisted of a lady and her three nieces taking a first, and therefore much to be envied, trip through Devonshire, a clergyman with his wife, and a fisherman full of anecdote and good-nature, *en route* to his favourite secluded trout stream, the whereabouts of which he kept a profound secret, wise but selfish man. Pleasant company all, and we soon threw off our mutual reserves, and spent together a very agreeable chatty evening, one of many similar ones spent under like circumstances. A

huge grand hotel seems to freeze all this friendliness out of people; therein they sit silently in solitary state. How great the contrast!

Then, again, what a cheery room we had, looking out across that quiet green close right on to that majestic grey cathedral of old; truly an art education in itself—verily a petrified poem. At all hours our prospect was one of unfailing delight, a bit of the romantic uncommonplace. Time only changed the effect, it did not alter the loveliness; the view was always charming whether we saw the ancient fane, grey with years, softly lighted up and gilded by the tranquil rays of the parting sun, or standing darkly, silently, vaguely undefined in the misty even-light, veiled in solemn gloom, save where it was silvered over by the pale moonbeams; or whether bathed by the rosy tints of early morning with all detail lost in grey mysterious shadow, mystery fading into mystery, looking like the building of a dream, a splendid vision, an etherealised reality, an architect's unattainable ideal. Then the subdued, soothing, half-sorrowful, monotonous caw, caw, caw, of rooks, holding early matins on their own account, strangely emphasised the general wall-girt silence and hallowed peacefulness. All these things made a great impression upon us, a feeling not to be defined nor analysed. Rising in the morning and looking out upon all this, it was as though we had been suddenly awakened out of a Rip Van Winkle slumber, having however slept backwards instead of forwards; and we could hardly help asking ourselves if we had not really, by some untold magic, been conjured back into the past, and were not, indeed, existing in some mediæval city, so unlike our ordinary town world it was.

We spent a very agreeable morning wandering over the town; the shop windows proved wonderfully alluring after our short absence from such attractions, and we were tempted to make sundry purchases of many pretty useless things, which after the pleasure of buying we did not know what to do with. A week or so's ruralising makes one see things with new eyes. No wonder our country cousins are so delighted with their short stay in town.

Of course we went first to the cathedral, over which we were considerately allowed to ramble vergerless, much to our enjoyment; we did not want to have everything described to us whether we would or no, making a sort of museum of the place, leaving nothing for us to imagine. It suited not our tastes to be led along, as if we were upon a personally conducted tour, compelled to listen to long-winded accounts about those things we cared not for, and perchance hurried past those we did. Instead of all this, we were given a printed hand card with all necessary information thereon, and left to ourselves. I know not to whom this most excellent arrangement is due; but whoever he or they may be, I feel deeply truly grateful to him or them. It was a pleasure for once to take one's own time and way of seeing things, to linger here and there, and not to have our train of thoughts ever and again rudely disturbed by the inevitable 'Next, ladies and gentlemen, you will observe,' and so forth in parrot-like wearying repetition. A guide going his everlasting rounds with the same stories, often, as I can answer for, given word for word, taking up the same positions, stopping at the same appointed places, is the nearest approach to a machine in flesh and blood

I know of. Such an office would drive me mad in a week. And the grand words they will use, the absence of any real interest in what they show, their abuse of the poor unfortunate letter 'H,' make the general run of guides (of course there are honourable exceptions) an intolerable bore to me.

The magnificent western window of the nave delighted us with its rich rose of traceried stone, lace-like in its rare intricacy of forms, a marvel of mosaic colouring, a rare gem of Gothic splendour, a wealth of sculptured invention and translucent iridescent loveliness. That wonderful window of walled light—how can I describe it? It is more like a glorious collection of costly jewels in an open setting, than so much mere glass. The perfect beauty of stained glass is its metallic gem-like 'unglass-like' qualities, a something to be felt, not conveyed nor comprehended in language. And when the sun shines through all this, softened and glorified with a world of countless glowing magic tints blended into an opalescent mystery, what a miracle of colouring, what a marvel of harmonious hues, are born, hues beyond an artist's wildest conceptions or his powers to realise, unless he could dip his brush into molten jewels. And again, as the glowing rays of ruby and gold, of purple and blue, fire-flashed fall upon some old tomb or portion of mellowed wall, it is as though a bit of an antique missal had been transferred there. So the rays, colour-charged, wander, lighting up the dreamy dim interior, the solemn religious gloom, painting the fretted roof and soaring columns, sending streams of lustrous loveliness through the sombre walled space, lingering lovingly and tenderly on sculptured arch or spreading floor, anon vanishing, then re-

appearing, as the gleams of sunlight come and go, glorifying all they rest upon. How can words describe all this?

Exeter Cathedral is rich in ancient monuments. One amongst the many we especially noticed; it had been skilfully restored, regilded, and repainted, but, strangely enough, not spoilt by the process, and thus this fine monument had much the appearance of what it was long centuries ago when first erected, and its interest was great accordingly. Some existing members of the family, we learnt, had caused the work to be done, a rather rare occurrence. How many people can trace thus their old ancestors back to their silent alabaster tombs? The effect was most pleasing. Not always, alas! are restorations thus; but such a one only serves to prove that the restorer need not of necessity be a destroyer, though as a rule, I am sadly obliged to confess, he generally richly merits the latter title.

In this happy and exceptional instance, the old colouring had been carefully copied, not improved upon (save the mark!): evidently, as far as it was possible, tint for tint had been given, the original faded pigments really reproduced; thus the old tomb had been restored to its first glorious estate, giving the rich harmonious yet solemn subdued effect of the old-world architect. Only thus, when loving and meaningly restored, can one fully understand the subtle beauties of past designs, for they who planned them added colour to form, the work alone of perfect artists, who knew their art. Seldom is such an opportunity offered, for when in the rare cases these old monuments have been restored—oh, their cruel staring gaudiness!

Chipped and broken, damaged in sundry ways, all colour faded and gone, forgotten years ago, most likely uncared for, dust-laden, dirt-encumbered, perhaps, as well, carved it may be with the names and initials of unworthy beings, who in the dark ages of our land found the alabaster recumbent figures a delightful field for their occupation—how can one judge from such the pristine merits of these fine old sculptured monumental remains? And yet I have met some who, not considering all this, have found fault with these beautiful specimens of old-time art, who see them only as they are, and cannot supply what time and man have taken from them, to whom the past is as though it had not been. They observe only the blemishes wrought by age and hand, they regard not the good that still remains. Crude they call them. Crude! would that they who criticise could do the like; they would have plenty of employment then, without passing judgment upon that which, were they to live for ever, they could never hope to equal or approach. It is so much easier to find fault than to do the work.

Now-a-days we are not such Goths as to allow our ancient monuments to be wilfully defaced. We err, perhaps, on the side of carefully doing nothing for fear of doing wrong—a good fault, but a fault for all that. To place and keep our ancient memorials in sound repair, artistic as well as structural, to discover and maintain, as far as it is practicable to do so, the intention and feeling of the ancient work, doing from time to time all things needful to keep them in order, appears to me to be the right way of proceeding. To do nothing for fear of doing evil is a folly; thus will they gradually

go to decay, a result our descendants will hardly be grateful to us for. Better even a badly restored memorial of the never-returning past (though bad restoration is not a necessity), than none at all.

I well remember upon one never-to-be-forgotten occasion, on going over an interesting old church, I, thinking no harm, wiped the thick dust of ages from off some beautiful old carved oak, the better to observe the details of the carvings, and a rare trouble I got into with the clerk for so doing. Now, I can see no possible beauty in dust, it is simply 'matter in the wrong place,' nor can I understand how any genuine antique carvings can be improved by a thick layer of it; if the work will not stand this being removed, it had better itself be taken away. Dust on modern antiques may help to deceive the innocent, the very innocent I should say, at least sundry dealers in these precious articles appear fondly to imagine so; but this is not to the point.

Much as I value many things that are old, age alone does not give merit. I am no relic worshipper. My love for the old, apart from any associations, is because it generally consists of worthy work, full of feeling, love-laboured and satisfying.

The restorer, like the doctor, we cannot do well without, love we him ever so little. Buildings must be maintained; if only restorers would be contented simply to maintain them and not to show their skill in altering them, it would be a good thing. They should remember that an ancient building, hoary and grey with years, made sacred by the memory of past generations of worshippers, weather-stained, worn, and time-mellowed, is a precious relic not lightly to be

dealt with. It is sad to think that all this delightful flavour of antiquity, the slow growth of countless years, may be totally destroyed in a few short days, and when once destroyed can never be replaced—neither money nor prayers will do it.

The intense love our American cousins have for such antique structures, coming from a world where everything is new to one where happily much that is old remains, should help us to value them aright. We should show by our tender care of them how we prize the priceless legacies our ancestors have handed down to us—a glorious heritage indeed!

Old buildings, more especially old churches, may be full of incongruities, indeed they often consist of a curious conglomeration of different periods of architecture, forming a chapter of art history, but for this very reason most precious. Their incongruities are a part of their picturesqueness; they have naturally become what they are, a more or less perfect evolution from the first primitive structure—Darwinism applied to buildings. No sane man would dream of deliberately raising a new edifice thus; the result would be a ridiculous pretence, as unseemly as hanging Wardour Street armour in some grand old oak-wainscoted hall, a something to laugh or grieve about. But where such incongruities exist, time-blended into a not inharmonious whole, they possess, by the story of the past they tell, a special charm and an interest that no uniform building can possibly have. Such old piles were not originally thus, they have grown so; and before destroying their character in any way under the plausible plea of consistency, we should think well and long. We may legitimately add to such when absolutely necessary, or

rebuild a threatening portion, as did they of old, for then we are but adding a chapter to their history; but even this should be done with extreme caution, not because we wish to do it, but because we are obliged, taking care always, whilst we add, not to interfere in any way with the general character of the pile. Thus may we impress the individuality of our age upon it, and even enhance, instead of destroying, its value for posterity.

Of zeal in restorations, we have had enough and to spare; it only requires that such zeal should be tempered with genuine conservative love for the work of the past, and knowledge of the irreparable mischief that may be wrought by inconsidered action.

In the afternoon we took a stage on to Dawlish, and a pleasant stage it was, through woods and villages, past streams and rivers, by fields and meadows, all bathed in the golden light of the noonday sun. How delightfully the rich red soil here contrasts with the cool green of the crops and foliage—complementary colours in powerful opposition, greens mingled with reds, enhancing greatly the effect of the scenery. The red soil furnished the country as it were, as a richly tinted paper furnishes a room. The colour of the earth has more to do with making a pleasing landscape than many people would imagine. A ruddy tone is more satisfying to the eye than a chilly grey hue such as slaty rocks afford; but each has its own beauties: with mountain peaks and grim precipices the cold forbidding look is more in keeping with the prospect; but in pastoral scenery we want nothing frowning or dreadful, peacefulness and quietude is what the mind craves for and the eye desires.

On our way we passed by the well-wooded park that surrounds Powderham Castle (an enviable residence), and driving under a rustic bridge we soon reached Starcross, from whence we had a picturesque peep of Exmouth across the tidal river Exe. Here stretches out a wan waste reach of treacherous sands, dreary and desolate, lifeless and forsaken save for a few circling sea-gulls, whose plaintive cries harmonise well with the barren scene, the wailing of the wind, and the sad surging of the sea. I have old recollections of this spot, not particularly pleasant ones either, having once, whilst on a pedestrian tour some years ago, lost my way upon them in a fog, and nearly in consequence my life. It was at Exmouth that the elder Danby, R.A., the celebrated marine painter, resided for a considerable portion of his life, studying the glorious open sunsets that are so specially fine at the broad mouth of the Exe, often indeed so spectacular as to seem when painted, to those who know them not, unreal. And doubtless this wild waste of sandy salt-water desert afforded him suitable and effective material for many of his compositions. Such spots, dreary, dismal, and desolate though they are, have great attractions for many painters, contrasting so sharply with our modern refinement and over-civilisation.

Here at Starcross the railway and the road run together in close proximity, and just as we arrived at the spot, a sudden roar, a fiend-like shrieking of a metallic whistle, a whirlwind of dust and steam, told us that the London express was passing. Our horses made this the excuse to plunge about and rear in a most disagreeable manner, and it was some time before

they recovered their usual equanimity. It is a shame that railways should be allowed to run so close alongside the high roads.

Now our road became hilly, and increased if possible in loveliness. One view we had in particular charmed us much, and caused us to pull up the more to enjoy the pleasing prospect. And this is what we saw: A nestling village tree-embowered, the gleam of a winding river, backed up and thrown into relief by dark waving woods, a peep of purple hills beyond, fading away into the pale blue of the sky. A delightful picture, but not an uncommon one to the traveller by road.

Another mile or so brought us to a cross raised on a grassy corner of two roads. This at once attracted our attention; but on dismounting to discover the why and wherefore of its existence, we found we could learn nothing. It was simply a stone cross, and that was all. There was no inscription upon it, so we could imagine anything we liked, and we imagined a great many things, all but the correct one possibly. A monument (if such it was) without any inscription appears to me to be like the play of 'Hamlet' with Hamlet left out. It is a strange idea to erect enigmas thus; and as it was useless puzzling our brains to no purpose, we gave the riddle up. Soon after this we came to Dawlish.

CHAPTER X.

A Toy Village—Red Cliffs—Exploring a Devonshire Valley—Narrow Lanes—Horse Bells—Primitive Travelling—An Animal's proper Pride—A Smuggler's Lane—A Tale of the Past—Weatherworn Rocks—Teignmouth—Ugly Churches—Beauty and Ugliness—A Devonshire River—The longest Bridge in England—A breezy Drive—Torquay—Poole's Cavern—A fine Marine Drive—In Search of a Ruin—A Camp-out—Rural Hospitality—The Cream of Scenery—A Disappointment—The Drawback of knowing too much—The old Devon Sea-Dogs—A late Drive—Totness.

DAWLISH, as we saw it first from a distance, looked to us for all the world like a sort of toy village, with its little green, through which runs a tiny stream, banked up so as to form mimic falls, hardly sufficient to wreck a child's play boat. Around this green were picturesque houses, one or two actually thatched; and set in the midst of all, a mill with a busy water-wheel, just where an artist would have put it. The whole place looked almost too pretty to be real. 'What a sweet spot!' was my wife's involuntary exclamation, and those four words well describe it.

But pretty as it is even now, the railway has somewhat spoilt Dawlish, coming right between it and the sea-front. And not alone is the beach so far damaged, but the noise and smoke of the many passing trains make the hotels and houses facing the sea the least desirable to stay at, thus reversing the order of things at the general run of watering places. Our inn, a most

excellent one, was situated some distance away from the briny, facing the rural green.

The railway here for some miles skirts the coast, running along a massive stone embankment, that is when not in a tunnel, utterly doing away for the time with the natural wildness of the shore. The winter seas play sad havoc with this structure, sometimes even for a time stopping the trains, and lifting tons of stones about like a giant at play.

But though it has done its best, even the railway has not managed to quite destroy the charming rusticity of the spot. At different places on the line may be seen the old stationary engine-houses, which were in use when the atmospheric principle was employed in these parts in place of the locomotive. We were informed by an engineer we met (what was his authority I know not) that this principle worked very well here, but had eventually to be given up because the trains from London were so generally late, causing all the large engines to be kept with steam up in readiness, thus by the loss of time entailing an unnecessary expense.

The red colour of the cliffs at Dawlish is very effective, especially when lighted up by the sun; these contrast greatly with the white and glaring chalk cliffs of Kent and Sussex. The coast line too is irregular and broken, the rocks vary in hardness, and the sea has worn away the softer portions of the cliffs. Strange forms the water-worn rocks sometimes assume, wonderfully diversified, and, when seen under the effect of strong light and shade, delightfully picturesque. Upon the shore here we found some curiously marked pebbles; one of these which we had polished was afterwards

much admired; its beauty and chief interest consists in the fact, that it is positively crammed with all manner of fossils of the smaller inhabitants and of the marine plants of a prehistoric sea. How many æons of ages old such are, I should not like to venture a guess; strange that they should have been for so many countless centuries thus carefully preserved, to tell us in these latter days what manner of crustacea, small fish, and plants, lived in the ancient oceans when the world was young, and man did not exist.

The general pleasantness of the place, the opportunity of a dip (the bathing arrangements at Dawlish are a pattern for all other seaside resorts), tempted us to stay over a day here, which we employed in exploring the valley or combe, in which Dawlish lies, for some miles inland. This is one of the most thoroughly Devonshire valleys I know, yet though so lovely it is but little visited. An artist might paint in it for a lifetime, and not exhaust a tithe of its beauties. Our drive was nothing but a series of ready-made subjects the whole of the way, ever changing, ever fresh. And here we experienced, for the first time this journey, a characteristic Devonshire lane, long, narrow, winding, and apparently never ending.

Shortly after leaving Dawlish, we entered quite a leafy tunnel, dark with a green-grey gloom, the trees joining overhead in interlacing branches, shutting out most effectually all sky and sunshine. How refreshingly restful it was—what a wealth of foliage, even for leafy Devon! Then up and down we went till we reached an old farmstead, irregular-roofed, bent and twisted about with the weakness of age, yet strong still, decked with velvety mosses and golden lichens; around were

fruitful orchards, beyond were wooded sunlit hills. On passing, we were greeted with a mingled odour of newly milked cows and fresh hay, and the many noises of a farmyard, a cackling of hens, a neighing of horses, and a bleating of sheep; but most musical and pleasantest of all, the rhythmic sound of scythe-sharpening, a rare thing to hear now in these days of mowing machines; but mowing machines do not suit these uneven, hilly, rocky fields—may they therefore never grow more even or less rocky! Machinery in this peace-bestowing valley would be strangely out of place; the restless constant rattle of a reaping machine, the din and droning hum of a steam thresher, the black smoke and laboured puff, puff, puff, of a steam-driven plough, would utterly spoil its charm of remote tranquillity, the gentle sweetness of its rural life. But even all these would be better than a railway running along it, from which sad fate may it eternally be preserved.

The farmers here are contented with the good old-fashioned way of doing things; indeed, I doubt if any other way would answer. As far as we could judge by appearances, they looked as prosperous, more so I fondly imagined, than their more advanced brethren; they certainly looked 'jolly,' and seemed contented, which is a great thing.

On and on we went, upward tending for the most part; now and then for a change came a dip in our way, and at the bottom of one of these we crossed a tiny ford, with just sufficient water to make an excuse for a picturesque foot-bridge; this, overarched with spreading trees, through whose leafy recesses gleams of sunshine stole ever and anon, was as delightful 'a bit' as ever gladdened the heart of a painter. And so we went

along from beauty to beauty, till we felt the time had come for us to turn, though the temptation to continue our explorations was great. But the turning was easier talked about than accomplished; the lane was as narrow as a lane could be, and room is required in which to turn. At last, however, this requisite was found, and by a squeeze we managed to put our horses' heads on the homeward track.

We could not help asking ourselves from time to time, whatever we should do if we met anyone, as there was certainly not room to pass any vehicle, unless for the moment the road could be stretched, or our phaeton conveniently compressed. Just as I had remarked how lucky we had been in this respect, we observed a horse and cart advancing ahead. What was to be done—how could the impossible be achieved? We at once pulled up and sounded our horn, but the driver took no heed, still he came along. When within hearing distance, we shouted that there was no room to pass; but the man in charge took things calmly, evidently he was used to these lanes. We waited the course of events, it was the only thing to do. But the carter knew his work; suddenly he came to a stop, dismounted, and coolly opened a gate leading into a meadow, then took his cart and horse quietly through, thus giving us a clear road on which to proceed; when we had passed by, he drove the cart out and went whistling along, that was all.

But though the problem on this occasion was so easily solved, it struck us it might very well happen that there was no suitable gate or field at hand; the field might be one of growing corn, and how then? From inquiries we afterwards made, we found that in

some parts where the lanes were thus narrow, the farmers' horses had bells attached to them, and by the tinkling of these as they went along, their approach was heralded while yet some distance off; an opportunity was thus given for one of two parties meeting to clear the way. Generally, we were informed, there were certain appointed meadows into which at a pinch one or other of the approaching teams could drive, each farmer thus obliging his neighbour. Truly a rather primitive and original way of travelling.

During our wanderings we observed many such be-belled teams. One of these, stopping in front of a village hostelrie at which we had put up, gave us the opportunity of inspecting it at our leisure, and having a chat upon the matter with the driver. In this case each horse had eight bells on (a rather generous supply); they were of different pitch, ranging from a treble to a bass, and all were musical in tone. The driver told us 'the master had had them for years, they having belonged to his great-grandfather before him;' moreover, he informed us, 'the horses were pleased with their bells.' Upon one occasion, indeed, being in a great hurry, he had neglected to put them on, the consequence of which was, the horses were so indignant they refused to start, and he was obliged to wait till they were fixed on, when the team at once proceeded contentedly along. Even cart-horses have their proper pride! As the team left, the many bells made a tuneful melody, and now and again as the horses shook their heads they caused mimic peals of silvery clashings by way of chorus; the tintinnabulations of these came pleasantly wafted to us on the stilly air, ever rising and falling in cheerful cadences, growing

fainter still and fainter, till they finally were lost altogether.

Out of Dawlish the road was hilly. About half of the way to Teignmouth, we noticed to the left a narrow winding lane, overarched with trees, and lined with a delightfully tangled hedge. This appeared as though it might lead down to the sea, and all at once the happy thought struck us, that it would be a pleasant and agreeable change to send the phaeton on by road and walk along the shore for the rest of the stage. But we were not certain whether this was feasible, as our maps did not show the lane in question. Observing, however, an old man resting near, we inquired of him, and learnt that we could do as we wished; this and much more we gathered from him, for we found that he was of a chatty and communicative disposition, and seemed to know a good deal about local affairs, so we allowed him to indulge in a gossip.

'Did we know,' he asked, 'that the lane was called the smuggler's lane?' No, we did not. 'Well, it was, and a mighty lot of things were smuggled up it in the old days. You see yon farmhouse over there? Well, the fellow as had it then, he was in the running. Bless your heart! he made a fortune at it—one don't get such chances now-a-days, worse luck—he weren't no farmer, not he, far too clever for that, at least so I've heard my grandfather tell. And they say as how there's lots of cellars under the old building. I'm not a young man,' possibly he was about seventy, 'but it were not in my time, I'm just a-telling you a' what my grandfather told me. The farmer chap always knowed when a carg'y was to be run in, and he used to send his carts and horses down that there lane to meet 'em, and

stow the carg'y away all right and tight in his cellars.' Was he never found out? 'I never heard that he was, it were no easy matter then; besides, nobody ever suspected him, he were so very respectable like, you see. Lor' bless you, sir, things are all altered now; there weren't no railways or telegraphs then.' 'Indeed!' we replied, as though the information was new to us; and so the conversation rattled on apace, at the end of which our informant desired to drink our very good healths. We told him we should be most happy 'to stand treat,' but there was no inn near. 'Never you mind about that,' he replied; 'I'll drink it at Teignmouth when I gets there; I won't forget, and the young lady's too.' Upon which a small silver coin changed ownership, and we bade our entertainer farewell, and as we turned down the old smuggler's lane he shouted after us, 'Mind, I won't forget; I'll drink both your very good healths as soon as ever I gets to Teignmouth, honour bright.' He appeared as though he was afraid we might imagine that he would put our present to some other purpose, which, however, we never for a moment did him the injustice of supposing.

Down the darksome wood-girt lane we wandered, till at the end we came in sight of the sunlit sea, a broad expanse of glittering blue, merging into bottle-green near to the shore, where it also was coloured with the sand. Why will not painters remember that the waves are often sand-charged near the beach, and so give them to us? It was a soothing thing, that hot cloudless day, to listen to 'the sighing of the summer sea, asleep upon the sandy shore,' to watch the tiny wavelets landwards wending, sparkling in the light like countless diamonds strewn upon

the reckless waters, flashing forth in multitudinous array.

> The bridegroom sea
> Is toying with the shore, his wedded bride;
> And in the fulness of his marriage joy
> He decorates her tawny brow with shells,
> Retires a space to see how fair she looks,
> Then proud runs up to kiss her.

The walk would have been a most enjoyable one had it not been for the unbeautiful railway embankment and the unmusical thundering of the trains, so assertively out of harmony with the picturesque naturalness of all else around. The perceptible scent of smoke and sulphur, and the damp odour of steam, that each train left behind, unpleasantly impregnated the otherwise pure ozone-laden atmosphere.

We noticed at this point the two strange weather and wave worn rocks known locally by the titles of the 'Parson and Clerk.' Whatever they may have resembled in times past I cannot say, but at present they are about as unlike two human beings or faces as it is possible for anything in sculptured stone to be, whether wrought by hand or natural causes. Grotesque they are, but it is a mistake to christen such easily crumbled rocks, as they vary so in appearance year by year, especially when, as in this case, they are exposed to the weathering effects of every storm, and to the denuding operations of winter frosts.

Teignmouth is perhaps as picturesquely situated as Dawlish, but the town itself is commonplace, and not worthy of its site, and its churches are in keeping with the town; they struck us as being—externally at any rate—the perfection of ugliness. Often we have noticed ugly churches in an ugly town, as though the

one reacted upon the other. This in truth may be so; a thing of beauty, as a fine old ecclesiastical edifice, a castle or manor house, often causes the eye to be trained to learn its art value and graceful symmetry, and such teachings in a greater or less degree bear their results in due time. You cannot have the beautiful ever before you without being in some measure the better for it. As beauty begets beauty, so ugliness begets ugliness; each bears its own fruit. It was the simple graceful harmony of a little unpretending Gothic window, in an otherwise ugly church, situated in a still uglier village, a much whitewashed and despoiled church, with but this one sole remaining treasure of its former comeliness, that as a child taught me the beauty of form, the captivating charms, and the graceful gladness, of true Gothic work. How even my untrained eye delighted to be free from all my commonplace, mindless, feelingless surroundings, and to gaze upon its flowing blending lines, all upward tending, till it appeared to me as though there was nothing else so beautiful on earth. A child-like view truly, but one proving still what a power in the world even so small a thing of beauty is. What boy or girl is not in after-life the better man or woman for a lovely home, and lovely things to look upon?

Here at Teignmouth, the Teign, of wild Dartmoor birth, surely one of the sweetest, most tree-embowered, and fern-clad of rivers, ends its short and varied life, and broadening out finds its final home in the all-absorbing sea. This river we crossed upon a low long bridge, with a heavy toll attached to it. Our road book makes the remark that 'this is the longest bridge in England.' It might possibly have been so when

the work was published, but the world has moved since then; railways have come into being, and now there are plenty as long, and numbers longer. I doubt much whether even an old bridge we passed over at Swarkestone in Derbyshire, on a previous journey, is not of much greater length, and it certainly is of greater age; but this latter bridge does not simply span a river, but rather a river and continuous marshy ground, and so it may not count as a whole bridge proper.

A stiff mount now brought us upon high ground, with an expansive sea view on one hand, and a far-spreading rolling country on the other. A breezy bracing drive over these elevated uplands, with a good many ups and downs, led us to Torquay, where we found altogether another climate; the air seemed hot, relaxing, and unrefreshing; the white houses and gleaming sea were intolerably glaring, contrasting greatly with the restful green and generally mellowed look of the landscape, and of the old weather-toned homes we had for so long been accustomed to.

At Torquay we rested our horses for a day, whilst we explored afoot the town and its surroundings, not forgetting the famed Babbicombe Bay, a sweet spot, combining thatched cottages, rural wooded simplicity, and seaside; spoilt somewhat, not so much as it might be, however, by its nearness to a fashionable watering place. The splendid marine drive here, ycleped the New Cut—why such an uninviting name, I wonder?—struck us as being exceedingly fine, affording the most glorious sea-scapes and cloud-scapes; were it only in Southern France, how highly it would be esteemed! At the farther end of the drive is situated the re-

nowned Kent's Cavern, of great interest to geologists on account of the revelations it afforded as to the great, almost unexpectedly great, antiquity of man. The story it told is beyond dispute. Here, at a depth of over twenty feet, under a solid layer of stalagmites, were discovered the fossil remains of extinct and other animals, beasts of prey that could not live in our present climate, and mixed with these were rudely formed flint implements and weapons of stone, identical with other remains found in different parts of the Continent. Amongst the number of wild animals were the bones of the mammoth, the woolly rhinoceros, the elephant, the lion, bear, hyæna, and tiger, proving that once upon a time these savage animals inhabited wild England. But how many countless centuries ago? A question more easily asked than answered. Why, the very climate of Britain must have changed since then; possibly it was not even an island at that inconceivably remote period, for, according to geologists, a mighty river once flowed where now the English Channel runs; and this only, instead of the sea, divided us from the mainland. I once possessed a most interesting map of those dim ancient days, published some years ago, compiled from dredgings taken in our home seas, which proved by the fossil remains of timber, freshwater fishes, aquatic and warm-blooded animals, the different condition of things then. This map showed prehistoric Europe, stretching much farther westward to the Atlantic than it does in our day; it showed also a continuation of the Rhine, grown to a second Mississippi, flowing through land where now is the North Sea, and emptying itself into the broad ocean somewhere between Scotland and Iceland!

We were not sorry to get away from Torquay, its soft southern atmosphere suited us not. So used had we become to being out all day long in the fresh, free, bracing air, that this warm wind-sheltered town seemed stifling, hot, and oppressive to a degree; to us it appeared almost airless, we could hardly breathe in the spot. Were I an invalid, I almost think I would prefer to die elsewhere than exist in Torquay. In this respect I should be like a certain noble gouty lord, to whom an enterprising wine merchant sent a sample bottle of port of a special sort, with the remark that he might indulge in it without any evil consequences; his lordship tersely replied that he had tasted the wine, but preferred the gout!

We left Torquay one warm afternoon—a spot, by the way, where to us 'it seemed always afternoon.' We had not proceeded far on our way, when, at the top of a hill to the right, we observed what appeared to be a round tower. This tower excited our curiosity, for it was not marked upon our most excellent map, nor were there any particulars about it given in our road book; a strange omission surely, as almost every spot, interesting or not, important or unimportant, was recorded, and moreover it struck us that the height upon which it stood, once gained, we should have a glorious all-round prospect, extending possibly to the wilds of Dartmoor. 'I do so wish we could get up there,' said my wife; 'but I am afraid it will take us dreadfully out of our way.' 'Take us out of our way!' I replied; 'what of it? Of course we will go.' Why, one of the supreme advantages of our journey was the ability to make any detour we might fancy, to wander whither we would. We were not accountable to any-

one for our time or our actions. What mattered it that by so doing we might arrive at our day's destination late, or even change it altogether? Besides, did we not carry with us a little store of preserved provisions, in case a camp-out was obligatory, and had we not as well a gipsy kettle, so that we could even indulge in afternoon tea, should we so desire? And somehow we often did so desire. There is an indescribable fascination about such wayside picnics; how delightful they always are, the charm of their novelty never seems to wear off. And where in the world is there a more pleasurable or a more inviting spot for such a repast, than on the tree-shaded grassy bank of a secluded Devonshire lane, with possibly a fern-clad chattering stream for company, all around you the perfection of peaceful retirement and the profusion of deep green loveliness? Wild flowers are sure to abound near your camping ground; and it will be strange if, besides the musical mutterings of a wayward stream, your ears are not gladdened by the mingled melody of many feathered songsters; and if you abide quietly, you may learn something of the lowly inhabitants of our fields—rabbits in time will, it may be, regain their courage, and come out of their hiding places to inspect you; a squirrel possibly will suddenly make his appearance, running nimbly down a tree close to your whereabouts, and sundry other unexpected visitors will surprise you. You cannot but take an interest in their proceedings; and they in turn, finding you mean no harm, will grow more and more confident, and, I have found, in the end even boldly venturesome. A more enjoyable thing for rest-seeking pilgrims than such rural picnics, the earth has not.

And not alone ourselves, our horses quite as much rejoiced in our campings out. We always took the precaution to carry in the boot with us a small supply of oats and peas, sufficient for a feed at any rate. This supply we replenished from time to time, when passing through towns or opportunity offered. Only once, indeed, has it occurred that we have run short, and upon that occasion a foraging expedition to the nearest farmhouse procured us all we required, more indeed, and it was with difficulty we could manage to induce the kind-hearted farmer to accept anything for what he had provided us with. 'Indeed, sir,' he said, 'you are most welcome; I am only too pleased to be of any service to you.' Somehow, on a driving tour we seemed to see nothing but the good side of human nature. Why it was exactly I cannot say, but we certainly everywhere received the greatest kindness. Merely because we were travelling by-road, was it, that all things were so pleasant for us? Everyone we came across appeared to take an interest in our welfare, and this was shown in deeds, not words. Somehow to us, during our journey, the world seemed a much pleasanter place to live in than it usually does. We truly saw the bright side of existence, and we rejoiced in the fact. Railways have brought us undoubtedly many blessings, but with the blessings some evil has been wrought. They have helped to destroy much of the old-world good-hearted hospitality, but, the fates be praised! some of it still remains, as we can testify. Possibly were road travelling more common, things might become altered; be that as it may, I speak of people as I found them. What numberless pleasant recollections and treasured memories have we not brought back

with us from every journey! A welcome seemed to await us everywhere. Often and often, on leaving our little country inn, has 'madam' been presented with a bouquet of flowers by the landlady, and hearty wishes (evidently sincere, not merely complimentary) have been bestowed upon us for a prosperous journey. Verily we felt we had received a something that money could not buy, and that our bill was more of an incident of our stay than anything else. My wife at the time of our excursion was out of health, and the unvarying kindness and attention she received from numerous kind-hearted motherly landladies deserves special grateful acknowledgment on my part; where the kindness was so truly universal, particular mention of any one would be invidious. For the credit of such, and a specimen of the treatment we received on the road, I may state, that often both landlord and lady, seeing she was not well, sent her some freshly gathered fruit from their garden, besides sundry cups of tea and other thoughtful attentions, for all of which they positively and firmly declined any remuneration, and all we were allowed to do, was to express our warmest thanks. Such is our experience of the reception afforded to an ordinary wayfarer by road, in this stony-hearted nineteenth century. Truly railways have not altogether changed human nature. But, oh, how different all this to the modern company-managed hotels, where you might die without anyone caring for you. There you are only a number and nothing more—Number 60 dinner at seven, or Number 20 leaves by the 9.40 train, that is all. Is it a wonder, kind reader, that I possess a love for the old England of the past?—no, thank Providence, not passed away altogether. Is it

a wonder that I have found wandering by road to be such a pleasant thing?

What a beautiful lane that was, that we had ventured upon out of our beaten way, a very ideal Devonshire lane, narrow and winding, bounded in by tangled hedgerows of careless growth, with spreading trees on either side, through whose leafy mazes above the warm sunshine gently tempered shone, forming trembling patterns of gold and green about our way. But lovely though our surroundings were, our prospect was bounded by our road, save where here and there a gate afforded us a glimpse into the quiet dreamy vale below, little beauty surprises which charmed us by their sudden unexpectedness.

The country around Torquay is quite idyllic, and thoroughly typical of Devonshire; it is the epitome of all that is lovely in English rural scenery, a bit of living poetry, an artist's dream realised, a vision of an earthly paradise. Have I said too much? In truth, no. Go the wide world over, and show me anywhere a country so fair, so full of soft sylvan delights.

All roads in Devonshire are beautiful—this goes without saying—but ours that day seemed pre-eminently so. How delightfully it wound about, first leading us in one direction, then in another, till we hardly knew where we were, and certainly had not the faintest idea as to what part of the world it would land us in. It enticed us on and on, till at last, just when we began to doubt whether it had any ending, we came upon our long-sought tower, which proved to be no tower after all, but the deserted shell of a prosaic old windmill, bereft of its sails and everything else besides—a bit of rough round rubble-work,



A DEVONSHIRE LANE.

without the beauty of age or any comeliness of form. Thus were our romantic imaginings rudely overturned, as our feudal castle keep vanished into thin air. Sometimes it is as well not to want to know too much, the conception is frequently more to be desired than the reality. A closer and detailed inspection of a spot may often rob us of many a pleasing impression. An old ruin, a wayside cottage, an ancient church, a rural hamlet, a passing peep of a distant town, space-beautified, may impress one with a glamour of romance, a poetic feeling that an attempt 'to do' the place would fatally dispel. So it is that an artist painting a picture —that is, if he is a real artist, who puts his soul into his work, not merely a feelingless photographic limner of externals—will not attempt to portray all that is before him; he will suggest much by a mystery of form and colour, not define all things. A camera may do this, but the eye never; that can only focus one thing clearly at a time.

But the old mill, if not ruined enough to become picturesque, was the centre of scenic attractions. We were on the highest ground for miles around, all alone with earth and sky; we looked down upon a circling world beneath, bounded by hills of blue and a ship-dotted sea, for it was no sailless ocean we looked upon—a glorious prospect wherever our delighted eyes wandered. Everything was dim, distant, and dream-like, full of soft sunshine or tender shade, as we silently looked around and drank in the deep beauty of the scene. To describe it I will not dare; it is a prospect to be seen, not written about, for its tranquil sympathetic loveliness baffles all description. And there was all that unfolding display, that peerless

panorama, and no one to behold it but ourselves, and this within little more than an hour's drive of a thronged and fashionable watering place. But then in the town were there not showy shops to see, German bands to listen to, a dull stone pier and glaring parade to walk up and down upon—and were there not, too, circulating libraries with the latest novels to read when tired of such good things—and who would leave all these for the simple unspoilt country? And what is the music of a rippling stream, the glad songs of birds, or the gentle harmonious rustling of the wind-stirred leaves, to the soul-stirring strains of a German band? What indeed?

Though I would not venture to describe the land portion of our view, the seaward prospect may be glanced at. The whole of Torbay map-like lay beneath us, from new Torquay to ancient fish-famed Brixham. The former town, with its white villas and surrounding deep blue sea, looked very continental, shining dazzlingly in the bright sunshine, asserting itself disagreeably above all other things, an unrestful spot that attracted the eye whether it would or not; all else was harmonised and mellow, beauty-blended. Be it near or far off, a prosperous modern watering place is not an attractive sight from an artist's point of view; it is but too suggestive of the eligible villa, the residential mansion, and palatial hotel, spic-and-span fresh as plaster and paint can make it. Newness in some things is a very good quality, but wines and houses, if good—'ay, there's the rub'—are all the better for a little age.

Peaceful as was the prospect now, we could not help endeavouring to picture to ourselves how different

it appeared one historic day, now nearly three hundred years ago, when the 'Invincible Armada'—invincible forsboth! why so proud a title?—in gorgeous magnificent array sailed slow and stately across that bit of British sea, not unmolested though, for those rare old Devonshire bull-dogs were at their heels, cutting out one and then another, and altogether making things exceedingly unpleasant for the would-be invaders. What a gallant host of sea-warriors has Devonshire of old given birth to! Well may she be proud of her noble sons, men who carried St. George's blood-red cross fearlessly round the world. Was not that renowned admiral of ever-glorious memory Devon-bred who would end his contest at bowls before putting to sea, though the Armada was then in sight, calmly saying, 'there was plenty of time to finish the game and thrash the Spaniards too'? As showing the spirit which animated our gallant forefathers, it is recorded that during the fight one of the English ships became almost water-logged, and the carpenter could do nothing to stop the leak, upon which one of the officers reported the circumstance to the captain, and asked what they were to do. 'Do!' replied that fine old salt with an indignant look, as though surprised that such a question should be put to him, 'do! why fight the d—— old tub till she sinks!' It must be remembered, some of the English vessels sent out in haste to meet the enemy were barely seaworthy, much less fitted to encounter hard blows. In this respect of unreadiness I fear our ancestors were not much better than their descendants. But those old sturdy Devon men would, I verily believe, have fought in anything that would float, rather than not have been in the

battle. We all know the English admiral's remark, 'It was devilish dangerous work, I expected to have been killed every minute; *but mind you, I would not have been out of it for the world.*'

Certainly not the least of these brave men was the lion-hearted Sir Richard Grenvile, he who so gallantly fought his little ship the 'Revenge' single-handed against the whole Spanish fleet. Was he not a son of Devon too? What does history say of him? 'In the year 1591, being then Vice-Admiral of England, he sustained with his single ship the most glorious unequal combat that is recorded in naval history, against the whole fleet of the enemy; and having repulsed them fifteen times, yielded not till his powder was all spent.'

An old manuscript of the seventeenth century, the valued possession of a friend, gives the following more lengthened account of the gallant exploit: 'A.C. 1591. there was a fight between an English ship called the Revenge in which Sir Richard Grenvile was captain which had but a 100 men fre from sicknes & 50 Spanish ships 24 howers, about the Azores! In the beginning of the fight at 3 a clock in the afternoone a Spanish ship of 1500 tunne being in the winde of the Revenge came towards her & becalmed her sailes and boarded her; after this 4 others boarded her, 2 on her larboard & 2 on her starboard the Spanyards after diverse attempts to inter the Revenge were still beaten back into theire own ships & into the sea; but as some were beaten of, soe others alwayes came in theire places, she having never less than 2 great galleons by her side & aboard her soe that in 12 howers there had 15 great ships assailed her with volleys, bourdings and interings besides those which

beat her at large, hereby all her tackling was cut insunder her upper worke altogether rased & evened with the water her pouder spent to the last barrell; yet the Spanyards liked their intertainment soe ill that they were more willing to harken to a composition than make any more assaults 4 of theire great ships being sunke & a 1000 men killed & our men yeilded to have theire lives saved & be sent for England.' What a pleasant ring there is in this quaint old-fashioned English account of an ever-famous sea fight. Past actions would almost seem to require past writing to do them justice.

Such was the spirit which dwelt in our stubborn ancestors' hearts. No craven souls held any place in England's councils then. To such men, bold, enterprising, glorying in deeds of 'derring do,' fearless even unto recklessness, we owe our world-encircling empire. Long may we keep it!

So engrossed had we been in our thoughts, pleasant picnic, and panorama both of sea and land, that we had not noticed the sun was setting and the too short day was about over; but a chilliness in the air and a growing gloom warned us it was time to depart, unless we would be there benighted. So the horses, after their feast of freshly plucked grass, munched with evident satisfaction, were again put to, and we found ourselves once more jogging along the bewildering mazes of a Devonshire lane, hardly knowing whither our road would lead us. Gradually though surely the light faded, the tallest trees alone were lighted by the sunset's lingering rays, all else around was veiled in a soft grey-blue shade; a silence too seemed to gather with the gloom; our lamps were lighted, our horn was

in frequent use at the many sharp turns, for we could not see far ahead, and as we did not feel sure where our night's quarters might be, we travelled fast, and delightful it was spinning along apace through an unknown land with a pleasant uncertainty as to what was before us. More than one sleepy cart and waggon were overtaken, the drivers of which seemed surprised to find a strange wayfarer on the same little-traversed road.

The landscape as we proceeded grew more and more mysterious, all things became curiously confused, lost or blended in the dim twilight obscurity, and we wondered much what would be really the final end of our many twistings and turnings. As far as we could, we kept ever westward tending, and so after much delightful doubt (for what mattered it to us where we should eventually arrive, as long as we did arrive somewhere?) we came to the sleepy little town of Totness. Driving on to the old stone bridge there, with the swift-running Dart coldly gleaming beneath under the darkening sky, we halted, and glancing around we noticed a ruddy light, coming from the open door of an hotel, thrown athwart the roadway. Pleased with this welcome gleam, tired though charmed with our day's rovings, we drove trustingly up to the inn, and found it to be all that a weary wayfarer could desire, which is saying a good deal; yet, though great the praise, it is none too much.

CHAPTER XI.

The Music of a running River—The Dart and the Rhine—Unjust Comparisons—English *versus* Foreign Scenery—Dartmouth—A Native's Opinion of his Home—An Old-World Town—A romantic River—A cruel Husband—Picturesque Totness—Towns and their relation to Scenery—Sleepy Ashburton—Dull Devonshire!—An Ostler's Warning—Devonshire Antiquities and Legends—Over Dartmoor in a Thunderstorm—A wet Drive—Grand Cloud-scapes—The March of a Mountain Storm—Moorland Mists—Dartmoor Ponies—Our Man's Opinion of the Devon Moor.

SOUNDLY we slept that night, hushed to sleep by the lullaby of the softly flowing river. Is there any sound in the world, I wonder, so soothing, so restful, as that of running water?—the measured rhythmic running of a stream or river, that is, not the disturbing continuous roar of a fall or torrent, or the sad wash, wash, wash, of wind-tossed waves, mournfully wailing upon a sandy shore: these are grand or solemn, but not reposeful; but the melodious songless music of gurgling waters, how rest-giving this—as slumbrous withal to look upon as listen to.

The gentle gliding of a river, how suggestive it is both of motion and repose, two such total opposites. The never-returning waters are ever resistlessly onward flowing, each moment changing, yet the river is still the same, with the same ripples, the same mimic whirlpools, the same multitudinous circling forms. It changes ever, yet changes never. It is the river you

first saw, though the waters you then observed are now on their seaward way.

The Dart is a famed river; yes, the Devon Dart is very beautiful, with its many-tinted wooded hills, its luxuriant green fields, its old ferries, its clustering cottage homes, its sunlit banks of grassy verdure. But why call it the English Rhine? It is about as unlike the Rhine as any stream can be; the only resemblance I can see is that both are rivers, and there all likeness ends. The Rhine is beautiful, but the Dart is incomparably more so. Not so romantic, however; the German river, with its stern castle-crowned heights, bears the palm in this respect. No one would willingly deny the Rhine its special charms, least of all myself, who love it well. But why these absurd comparisons, why these uncalled-for fabled resemblances? Each has its own distinctive characteristics and attractions. The Dart is no miniature Rhine, it is pre-eminently individual; why therefore compare two such opposites? One might as well call Ben Nevis the British Mont Blanc, Lodore the English Niagara, or the Thames the English Nile! Then again, why will the guide books, repeating one another so curiously, persist in terming lovely Lynton the Switzerland of England? Could any conceivable comparison be more ridiculous? Lynton is perhaps one of the most charming spots on God's fair earth—the most charming, I think; at least if there is a fairer one, I have not yet seen it. Southey says of it, 'Save Cintra and Arrabida, Lynton is the finest spot I have ever seen;' but I have not seen Cintra and Arrabida, so make no saving clause. But the charm of Lynton is its spreading many-tinted moors, with their breezy and bracing atmosphere, its swelling surf-beaten

hills, its richly wooded vale, adown which the tree-embowered crystal trout-loving laughing Lyn foams and splashes, gambolling joyously along its boulder-strewn bed, the most picturesque lovable little river imaginable—wood and hill, rock and river, craggy height and purple moor, a wonderful blending of the beautiful and the grand, the sylvan and marine. How utterly unlike all this to Switzerland, a country without any sea. In fine, these wretched comparisons are foolish to a degree. Let English scenery stand or fall upon its own merits; of its kind, it is unique in the world. 'Good wine needs no bush,' nor a beautiful country either, they must each be judged on their own excellencies; and if the beauty of Britain will not stand of itself, it is not the lovely land I take it to be. Did not Hawthorne, in 'Our Old Home,' writing from America, say, 'There is no scenery like it anywhere'? This, coming from an inhabitant of a country where Nature so abounds in scenic wonders, is praise indeed.

Somewhat in this strain ran our thoughts the next morning, as we sailed in the little hot steamer up and down the Dart. What a lot of adjectives we employed to express our admiration of all we saw! Not so two young men who were standing close beside us, fellow-citizens of ours, and bound on a walking tour through Devon and Cornwall, so at least we could not help learning from their conversation; they hardly once the whole pleasant journey deigned to cast a glance at the scenery; when they had ended their talk, one pulled out a yellow-backed novel and read it, the other lit his briar-root and glanced over a sporting paper. Strange that people should travel so far to see scenery, and when in its midst should so utterly ignore

it. But how often such is the case. I have frequently noticed people, when taking that truly magnificent trip through the grand mountain-bound water pass of the Kyles of Bute, just in the finest portion of the sail rush below to dine. By the way, the meal hours might often be better arranged; it is not fair to tempt the hungry Briton away thus, when passing through the cream of the scenery. Dr. Johnson was a thorough typical Englishman in this respect; his motto would appear to have been—scenery is a very good thing in its way, but a well-cooked dinner is a better. Who does not know his famous remark, made whilst on the top of one of the Scotch mountains, when he asked of his companion, who was pointing out to the learned doctor the various items in the far-stretching panorama, 'Sir, kindly show me our inn;' and his further remark, in answer to a deprecatory look, 'Sir, the finest view in the world is improved by a good hotel in the foreground'?

'You'll find Dartmouth to be a queer sort of an old-fashioned town, not up to much after London or Torquay,' said a native of the place we spoke to on board (for we always made it a point to converse with anyone we met, if at all likely to prove interesting or original); 'but,' he added with a proud look, 'we have improved the town a good deal of late, and in time it won't be so very far behind other places, I assure you.' The 'We have improved the town a good deal of late' did not have the pleasurable effect that our informant evidently expected it would. We could not raise the necessary enthusiasm over the 'improvements' to satisfy him. And when we told him we would much rather have it picturesquely unimproved, he

looked at us curiously, as though trying to find out whether we were making fun of him, or if we had verily taken leave of our senses; and when we assured him that we quite meant what we said, he quietly turned round, and walked contemptuously away! He evidently could not understand us, nor could we appreciate his longing for old-world Dartmouth to lose all its originality and be just like any other place. Verily this dead-levelling up—or down—is a terrible thing. When all towns are much of a muchness, intolerably alike, monotonously uniform, where will be the interest of travel? You may then, should such a much-to-be-regretted time ever arrive, as well stay in one spot, and imagine yourself anywhere!

Truly Dartmouth is a queer old place, charmingly situated, delightfully irregular, with many crooked streets, quaint antique buildings, and, to crown all, a glorious church of ancient date; these exist still, in spite of the progressive mania. Why, I wonder, do people so hanker after plate glass, and so-called handsome edifices? The place, too, looks so naturally picturesque, that if you have an artist's eye you are bound to fall in love with it. It is not so pretty as to appear artificial, nor yet so picturesque as to give the idea of unreality. It has no stagy look, that indefinable over-neat or planned appearance model villages always seem to possess, which for this very reason fail to please the beholder, because they generally look so intended; too good and clean, in fact, for honest every-day life.

Some few ancient houses of much interest—fortunately so far unspoilt, and strangers to the hand of the modern builder—still remain in its narrow winding

streets, on which dates of 1600 odd may yet be observed. One of these gratified us much, with its quaintly carved and grotesquely conceived figures, combined with strange representations of impossible monsters, supporting overhanging bays and projecting upper storeys, these latter being agreeably broken by curiously shaped casement windows with leaden lattice panes, the whole being suitably surmounted by a much carved and high-pitched gabled roof—a romance in building, a picture in wood and stone.

The two happily placed castles, one on either side of the river where it broadens out and loses itself in the sea, give a flavour of mediævalism and sense of antiquity to the place. Between these, in past times, was stretched a huge heavy iron chain, forming a barrier against the intrusion of a hostile fleet, and a protection against any privateering surprise. It must not be forgotten that Cœur de Lion with his crusading fleet sailed from here.

We returned to Totness up the Dart in the same manner we had descended it, by the little steamer that is, whose laboured puffing and beating paddles awoke one or two fine echoes. The effect of sailing up was quite different to the downward journey. So it is in driving; many people never think of looking backwards, they are perfectly contented with the forward view. If now and again they would only take the trouble to look round, they would be well rewarded and possibly surprised by many an unexpected peep. Moral—in travelling through a fresh country, do not neglect to stop from time to time, and take glances in the direction you have come from; you nearly double thus the scenic beauties of the journey, and obtain many charm-

ing varieties of ever-changing prospects, that would otherwise be totally lost upon you. So it was in our river trip; though, of course, we passed by the same class of scenery, it somehow looked different, and had the novelty of freshness to us. This simply because we saw things the reverse way to what we did in the morning. In painting also the same thing holds good; it is well now and again to turn your sketch upside down, and view it thus in a changed direction; by doing so, you behold it with new eyes as it were, and can the more readily tell its faults.

But in truth the Dart is no river to hurry along by steamer, it is a quiet homely little stream, many-bayed with countless hidden nooks and slumbrous backwaters, reed-fringed and overhung with waving green-branched trees, where the sense of retirement from the outer world and perfect peace can be had to perfection. The only way to really see the Dart is to hire a boat and row or sail up and down it leisurely, exploring thus its sleepy water recesses, where the mirror-like surface of the stilly stream repeats the woodland glories overhead; in these landlocked pools the river lovingly loiters, and all things seem blended in a poetic harmony.

The influence of such quiet restful spots is deep and abiding; no sweeter nor more lovable river exists. The peculiar exquisite beauty of the Dart is unique. From its lone rugged moorland home to its final resting place in the all-absorbing sea, the delightful Devon river is full of varied beauty, and affords a succession of the most charming scenes. First of all a wild wayward mountain stream, splashing and foaming, swirling and brawling by deep and shallow, fighting its impetuous way past many an impeding boulder, trout-

beloved, it by degrees becomes a sinuous peaceful gliding river, taking upon itself a gentle mood, winding in and out with many turnings, past hills and rustic hamlets, by grey old churches, by leafy woods, and a wealth of pastoral scenes, past thatched and weathered farmsteads, and many a lowly moss-begrown cottage, affording a panorama of bewitching loveliness. Truly this is a gem amongst rivers; in all the world there is only one Dart, and to know it is to love it well.

About half-way between Dartmouth and Totness is the rural wood-embowered and yellow-thatched hamlet of Dittisham, a spot drowned in fruitful orchards, as picturesque a peep as even fair Devon can show, which is saying much, very much. Here to a rock, mid-river, tradition says—but then tradition states so many things, that this may not be true—in olden days the inhabitants of Dittisham used to row their scolds, and leave them there, to rail at the wild winds and waters to their heart's content—Dittisham not being provided, as many towns then were, with a ducking stool. Indeed, it is recorded that a certain man took his wife there, and felt so happy and at peace in her enforced absence, that he conveniently forgot to fetch her away again, the result being she was either drowned or starved to death; and moreover it is stated that the law and his neighbours took a very lenient view of the matter. But this may be all a jealous report of Dittisham's rivals, some of whom, it is said, envied her her river-encircled rock.

This portion of the Dart is somewhat tourist-haunted and steamboat-disturbed, but none the less lovely though so hackneyed. Tourists and steam-

boats, excepting for the time, cannot spoil the Dart; a steamer once passed leaves the scenery as it was before; these therefore are not to be dreaded, but the ubiquitous engineer or builder is a far more dangerous enemy. May it for ever be preserved from their tender mercies. What a blessing it is this beautiful county has no coal mines or iron fields. Given these two in proximity, how man can spoil the fairest scenes!

Returning once again to Totness, picturesque old-world Totness, we hardly knew whether to award that delightful time-mellowed town or Dartmouth the palm for romantic beauty, and as it was so difficult to decide, we concluded they were equally charming; and those that know them both, and have a genuine love for our venerable antique towns, will probably acquiesce in our decision. Totness is so especially charming because it is in such perfect harmony with its surroundings. It has such a look of ancient homely repose. No desirable villa residences intrude upon its ancient quaintness, it is just what a little country town should be, but, alas! rarely is, complete in itself—a finished place and picture, exceedingly grateful to the eye therefore. Remove Totness, the scene would suffer; not many towns of which this can be said! It is so blended and harmonised with the country around, as to be almost picturesquely perfect with its happy and quaintly irregular outline, crowned by its weather-worn church. It is a part and parcel of the pleasant prospect, eye-delighting and satisfying, a bit of the true poetry of civilisation usually so terribly commonplace. Take Sheffield, Leeds, Birmingham, Halifax, Bristol, or almost any other modern town you like—what are they but blots

upon our fair green earth—ugly blots, hideous ones sometimes, the perfection of all that is unsightly. Necessarily so, perhaps, but ugly or hideous notwithstanding. Remove any one of these—who would dare to say that the land would not be the more beautiful? Remove Totness, you would spoil the prospect, so natural a growth is it, and, as all genuine natural growths are, pleasant to look upon.

Looking over our maps that evening, we held a long consultation as to where the next stage should be; for to us sufficient for the day was the pleasure thereof; we seldom planned anything ahead before the previous night, often not indeed till we had actually started did we definitely settle our route; sometimes even then we entirely changed our course whilst on the way, tempted by a pretty-looking country, that appeared as though it would well repay exploring. Consulting, therefore, our maps and trusty 'Paterson,' we eventually decided that next morning we would proceed northwards and cross Dartmoor to Tavistock, and so see some of the wilder beauties of Devonshire.

A pleasant drive through a country rich in beauty, with constant glimpses of the Dart winding in and out of the verdant landscape, with peeps of grey old churches and rambling old-fashioned homesteads, brought us to the plain and dull little town of Ashburton. An ancient writer, doomed to dwell in this part of the world for some time, took a gloomy view of Devon. Our everyday surroundings have a great influence upon us; indeed, I am by no means sure, all other things being equal, that a dweller on the south and therefore sunny side of a street will not take a brighter view of life than one residing on the northern

sunless side. This may appear a fanciful conceit, but none the less I hold by it. Cheerful influences around us, and a life led amongst scenery we love, have much to do with a man's temperament, at least they have with mine. So I can quite enter into the feelings and sentiment of the writer aforesaid, when he wrote, 'Where I have been and still am sad, in this dull Devonshire.' Under similar circumstances I should probably have felt the same, only I should not have condemned a whole lovely county for one sluggish or melancholy spot. Such inconsidered denouncements are most unjust. I actually met an Englishman in New York who had crossed the Atlantic to see America, but who was so disgusted with that city he took a passage home by the next steamer, without exploring the country farther. Truly in travelling you come across strange characters.

The morning we left Totness was not a very promising one for so wild and exposed a journey. The clouded sky had a louring stormy look, and moreover, the barometer stood at 'much rain,' and when we rapped it, it even slowly fell from that depressingly low point, in fact it fell so low it could not fall much farther, as we wisely remarked. But that fact did not afford us much consolation.

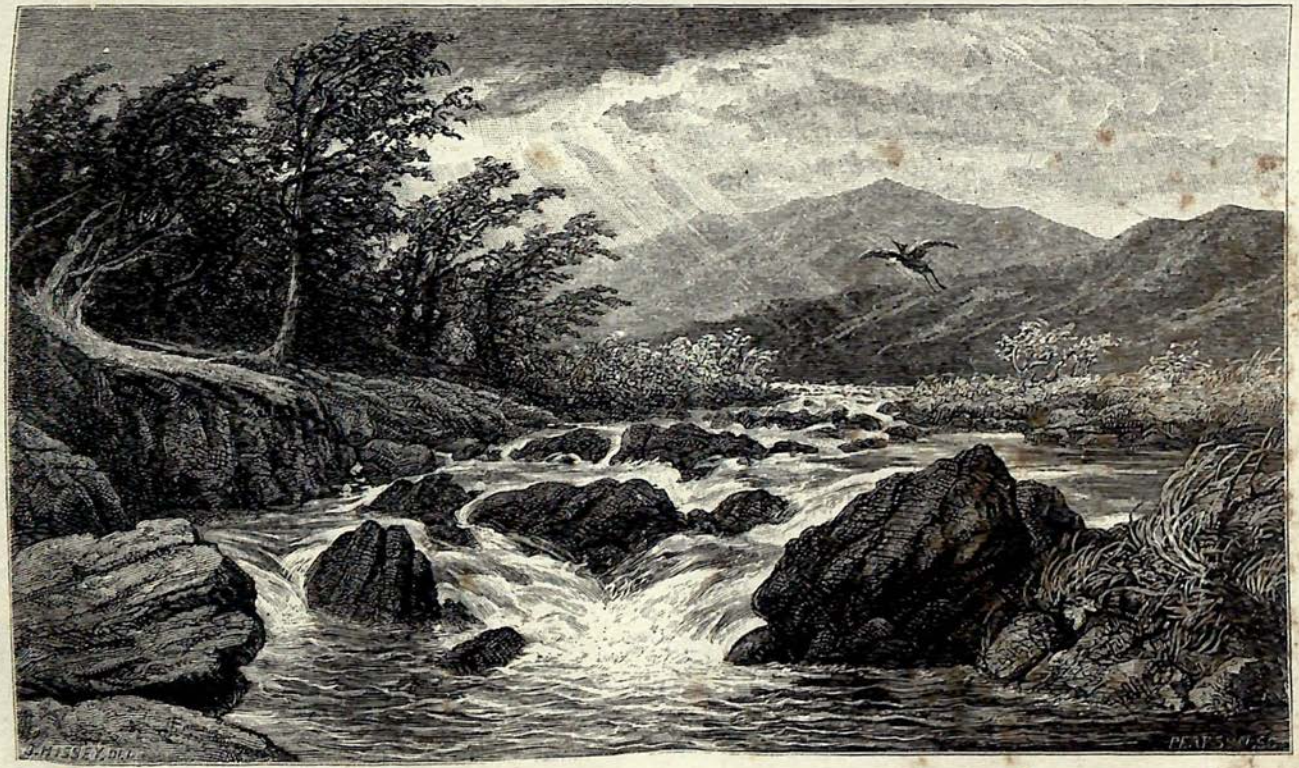
'Better not attempt to cross Dartmoor to-day,' said the well-intentioned ostler; 'we shall have a tremendous storm afore long, or I know nought about weather.' But his very remark made us the more resolved to go. Tell an Englishman not to do a thing, and of course he doubly determines to do it; it is human nature, or a Briton's nature at any rate.

To see storm-loving Dartmoor in all its wild glory

would be something to be remembered; and besides, though heavy clouds were hanging suspiciously about, patches of blue sky were ever and anon visible, and bright gleams of sunlight came now and again. After all, it might clear up; and besides, we had weathered many a storm in the Scotch Highlands, amongst the Welsh hills, and whilst crossing the bleak exposed Yorkshire moors; surely then we would not be deterred from our purpose on account of an ostler's prophecy?

When the horses came round to the door, the weather looked its best, and we, smiling, told the ostler that he wanted to keep us over another day for the benefit of the hotel. But he shook his head. 'Well,' he said, 'you may take my word for it, you'll have a rough time of it.' We simply laughingly replied, 'All right,' and giving the horses their heads were quickly on our eventful way; and so, as before described, we came to slumbrous Ashburton.

England has many moors, but only one Dartmoor. This is peculiarly characteristic in itself, there is nothing quite like it elsewhere in the world. A rough, rugged, rolling, far-extending granite upland, many-torred it is, with a soft, spongy, peaty soil, abounding in wild coarse grasses, studded here and there with dark, dreary, dismal pools, and ever and again through the black soil the underlying rocks peep forth, the very ribs of the earth laid bare. This wild waste is all intersected with numberless tumbling, dashing, angry streams, fighting their impetuous way amongst gigantic granite boulders that would stay their course, even overleaping these sometimes, after a spate, in writhing masses of porter-coloured water, seething in boiling cauldrons they have formed below, white and foaming



ON THE BORDER OF DARTMOOR.

with rage, furious at being thus checked in their onward flight, then making headlong plunges in places, with far-resounding roar, causing a rising of spray dust, sometimes made iridescent by a stray sunbeam, or even boasting of a mimic rainbow—a little gem of rare loveliness all the more beautiful for its rude rough setting. Not always in a turmoil these, however; now and again they form deliciously clear, cool-looking, rock-encircled pools, where for a time they rest. How beautiful are these! A raw-sienna tint the water bears, peat-stained, but translucent notwithstanding. You can see far down into their watery depths if you will, even trace every pebble at the bottom; you may note too, if you are quiet and have a quick eye, the shy speckled trout darting in and out of their rocky hiding places. How inviting are such pools for a plunge upon a hot summer's day! But in truth one comes to Dartmoor for cool airs, and as a rule you get them there to perfection. If the south coast of Devonshire is relaxing, here you can within a short journey indulge to repletion in an abundance of the most bracing atmosphere, almost too keen, indeed, at times.

How fiercely the breezes blow and sweep unrestrained right over this wild waste—north, south, or west, direct from their shelterless ocean home they come, rain-charged and cloud-bringing. They meet their first resistance here. Dartmoor receives the brunt of these storms, and effectually, too effectually for travellers thereon, condenses their mighty masses of vapour—little wonder it is the birthplace of so many rivers. There is nothing before it to check these sea-born storms; the wide ocean itself is too small to contain them, so they rush over to the land, and spend

their worst fury among the granite well-washed tors of dreary Dartmoor. To be caught, far from shelter, in this bleak inhospitable part of the world, is a thing to be remembered, though not one to be desired, and under any conditions, unless you are well clad in waterproof raiment, to be avoided. But for the properly equipped it is a glorious experience; the ozone-laden tonic-giving air is life-lengthening, and causes the blood to career through the veins in fine style.

This moor abounds in antiquities and old-world legends. It boasts, among other weird inhabitants, of 'derricks,' a curious race of spectral dwarfs; of 'wish hounds,' ghostly dogs which hunt their quarry in packs on moonless darksome nights; and, above all, of the famous mischievous 'pixies,' the spirits of children who have died unchristened, and who haunt the forest everywhere. Besides these there are many singular inexplicable rude stone monuments, memorials of prehistoric days, scattered here and there over its surface, some so-called Druids' circles being amongst the number; a massive bridge, composed of huge granite slabs, is also attributed to them—why? I never knew the Druids were bridge builders; indeed, it appears to me, we in truth possess very little knowledge of any kind about them; so, of course, knowing nothing, and as nobody can prove us wrong, when any mysterious stone structure exists, we at once conveniently give to them the credit of its erection. One thing alone is certain, that whoever raised these esoteric piles found little difficulty in elevating and moving for considerable distances ponderous masses of stone, for it is a remarkable fact that in many instances huge stones and cumbersome monoliths were employed when those of

less size would have done equally well. So rude, indeed, and weather-worn with the storms of untold centuries are most of these memorials of the unrecorded past, that it is often difficult to distinguish between the handiwork of ancient man and the curiously sculptured rock forms due solely to natural forces.

Leaving Ashburton, we entered fairly upon the moor, and as we ascended the scenery became bleaker and bleaker still, whilst the atmosphere grew colder and colder, chilly even, so much so that we donned our ulsters for warmth. The wild outline of the hilly moor loomed up impressively before us: a deep purple, densely dark, almost black in places seen under the sombre sky, a strange wilderness of gloom, altogether a cheerless prospect.

As we proceeded, black jagged-edged clouds rose up suspiciously in front, and warned us to prepare for foul weather; the waterproof aprons were quickly got out, and all made as snug as possible. A tempest was evidently brewing; after all, the despised ostler's prophecy was about to be fulfilled. Huge clouds drooping and bulging with aqueous vapour swept by overhead, the wind whistled eerily around the great rocks, wailing mournfully amongst the higher tors, now dropping for a moment, anon rising again in redoubled fury. Large drops of rain fell, then as suddenly left off. All things betokened an approaching storm, and one of more than ordinary severity. There was no shelter for miles, and in truth we rather gloried in the prospect of a battle with the elements in their own fastnesses. Louring masses of dark indigo clouds, threatening, torn, and rent, kept ever sweeping past. It was a grand sight to see these mighty suspended

masses sailing wrathfully and majestically along. But ahead of us it was that the outlook was the worst. Slowly yet surely advancing was an impenetrable bank of lurid crested cumulus, blotting out all things. We trotted on apace, in order to get over as much ground as we could before the downpour began. For a time there was a strange oppressive silence, an ominous peculiar stillness, to be felt not described, that precedes a storm. On and on the cloud masses came, in serried wreathing ranks, bending and burdened with rain, fold upon fold rushing over each other in a curiously confused hurried manner, full of an untold energy, suggestive of an irresistible power. There is no grander sight in the world than to watch the solemn onward march of a mountain storm. Even the mighty ocean lashed to its greatest fury is not so full of writhing overwhelming energy as the lurid, cloud-banked, massive, threatening cumulus of a thunder-gathered storm. Ever and anon the deepening gloom was lightened by fierce flashes from the fire-charged vapour. The dazzling lightning almost blinded us by its vividness, and made the deep darkness appear by the sudden contrast even deeper still—a darkness to be felt, an impenetrable thick blackness, a something tangible. It was not thin air, but air charged with darksome sulphurous matter. Only those who have fought their way thus across lone mountain heights or over desolate moorlands, with the elements raging around them, can comprehend the overpowering grandeur, the oppressive gloom, of a rushing, relentless, resistless black thunderstorm.

Now the wind once more arose in all its fury, so furious indeed it became as almost to check our

further progress. For a time it either grew somewhat lighter, or possibly our eyes grew more accustomed to the gloom; but this fact did not help us much, for the thick mists and slanting lines of hail obscured everything, we could not trace our course even a dozen yards ahead. The roadway literally swam with water, which also ran from off our aprons on either side of the carriage in ceaseless miniature cascades. What a drive it was! Around us everywhere a grey watery waste, moisture above, below, and the uncanny almost entreating cry of some wild storm-driven bird helping by its lonesome plaintiveness to add to the desolate impressiveness of the scene. But in spite of all our discomforts, we enjoyed the drive much, and we felt glad we had come. To see Dartmoor thus was an experience never to be forgotten.

On and on, right into the very heart of the storm, we fought our way, and a hard tussle it was; sometimes we were reduced to a walking pace, sometimes we were nearly brought to a standstill altogether, and more than once we were very glad to stop entirely, and shelter under the lee of a mass of tor-like rocks.

How spitefully the rain hissed as it descended, rebounding in its fury from off the earth! It might have been a second deluge in progress. A storm at sea is a grand experience, a storm on Dartmoor is not less so. Against such a stubborn opposing conflict of the elements we were glad to make headway at all.

Truly we made slow progress, but still we did make progress, and that knowledge was something. We were not even sure of our way, all was uncertainty, for it was out of the range of possibility to consult our

maps or road-book; and had we been able to do so, without any landmarks the information they would have afforded us would have been of small service, and we had quite sufficient to do to manage our restless steeds. And as for our excellent waterproofs, often before severely tried—well, in this case the weather gained a decided victory over them. The wet was most penetrating, it drove in everywhere, the result being, we were soon completely soaked through; the only consolation we had was, we could not well get wetter. As for catching cold, we never thought of such a thing, for experience had taught us that being out so much in the open air, roughing it as we did, we had gained such vigour as to be proof against any like evils. But still the wet was very real and unpleasant, to say the least of it; there was nothing, however, to do but to plod on and on moisture-laden as we were.

Quite unexpectedly and suddenly a suspicion of light showed itself before us on the horizon, a streak of yellow sheen causing a long low line of gleaming radiance along the moor, then the indigo blackness lifted, the grey rain became golden, and soon we were rejoicing in the welcome warmth of the sun's rays, watery rays but still rays, doubly welcome after so much depressing gloom. How the light changed the prospect! Stagnant pools of water gleamed out here and there from the dreary desolation, like so many mighty diamonds; the wet world below reflected everywhere the transient glories above. It was a wonderful transition. Unfortunately this welcome brightness was but fleeting, only a rift in the storm clouds—a moment's peace, in which the contending elements appeared to gather renewed strength to continue the struggle. The

darkness and the gloom came over once more, doubly darksome all things seemed by the contrast with that one bright gleam. Pit, pit, pit, hiss, hiss, hiss, down came the hail and rain again, fiercer if possible than before; and with these, most confounding of all, a driving obscuring mist. We did not need this latter to add to our perplexities; owing to it, we could hardly see our horses' heads, and actually had from time to time to descend and lead them to keep on the road at all. Presently came a fierce flash of blinding light, followed by a prolonged angry growl of thunder, then an Egyptian darkness, a howling of winds, and a roaring of overburdened unseen torrents—a general unearthly turmoil. Once we managed to get off the road, and nearly came to utter grief over some boulders; for a moment a general smash-up seemed inevitable—little wonder had such a mishap occurred.

How would it all end? we kept asking ourselves. We did not then despise the ostler's warning, and half wished we had not been so self-willed as to proceed against his advice. There are safer places in the world than an elevated exposed upland in a severe thunderstorm. How black looked everything that we could see! Now and then, through the mist and rain, huge masses of rocks loomed up spectrally and gigantically, appearing almost threatening, as though they might topple over and crush us. If only the mist would go, we kept exclaiming: it was bad enough before, but the mist was a terrible enemy, we could see nothing for it.

We learnt afterwards that these dense mists—impenetrable and baffling beyond conception save to those who have in similar circumstances to our-

selves contended with them, rain heavily soaking and beating through them the while—are a speciality of Dartmoor. As a rule, with wind and rain you have not the disagreeable accompaniment of fog as well. A combination of these three is altogether 'too much of a good thing,' as my wife justly remarked, and makes travelling no easy matter. No wonder, we thought; the Dartmoor ponies are famed for their hardiness and thick shaggy coats. How else could they exist?

In truth, it was a wild weird drive we had that day; how wild or grand, it is beyond my powers to tell. How near the thunder seemed, how close the jagged lightning! Magnificent it might be, but even a spice of danger takes a good deal of gilt off the magnificent. I wonder whether the shipwrecked mariner ever thinks of the grandeur of the sea that overcomes his gallant ship, or of the sublimity of the towering granite cliffs on which his fated vessel is dashed to pieces? I trow not.

It seemed as though all the elements had conspired to combine against us—wind and hail, storm and lightning, darkness and mists—just too when we were the most at their mercy. But the good old ship, our phaeton, had battled through many a storm before, and bravely she weathered this one.

The worst at last was over—things evil as well as good come to an end in this world—the mists got blown away, the thunder and lightning became more distant, we had passed safely through the storm-centre, and duly grateful and thankful we were. Now we began to descend, the rain still came down in right earnest, but fortunately the wind had exhausted itself,

the wet did not drive against us and enter everywhere, it came honestly straight down, but still it came down in torrents. 'Well,' said our man at last—it was the first word he had ventured to speak for a long time—'if this is Dartmoor I'd rather live somewhere else; why this is the very worst time of it we have ever had, and we've had some roughish times too over them Yorkshire moors. But Lor' bless you, sir, them's nothing to this un, they ain't in it;' then he added ruefully, 'I'm wet through and through' (we quite credited his statement from our own condition), 'don't know as how you are, sir. Macintosh? of course I had it on, but a dozen of 'em or any other 'toshes 'ud never stand against such weather.' Then he muttered to himself, but loud enough to be plainly audible, 'Hope there's no more moors in this part of the world, leastways no more Dartmoors,' concerning which latter he continued to mutter the most disrespectful remarks.

And thus in this sorry plight we arrived at Tavistock, dripping and half drowned, but in jovial spirits notwithstanding. I know not exactly how it was, but bad weather always seemed to make us specially jolly; perhaps it was a kind of bravado on our part, just to prove to ourselves that nothing could damp our ardour. Such, kind reader, was our experience of Dartmoor, and we would not willingly exchange it now for any other less grand.

Said the ostler to us on our arrival: 'You've had rather a wet drive over the moor.' 'Rather!' I indignantly exclaimed, 'there is no rather in the matter, we've had a regular drenching.' The ostler smiled; 'I see, sir,' he said, 'you're not used to our moor

weather; it's nothing to what it is in the winter time. You should try a drive over it when a nor'-easter is on; you don't half know what it is like till you've done that.' We could only reply, 'we did not want to know.' All the disagreeables we had *plus* cold would be, as our man told him, 'a something too dreadful.'

CHAPTER XII.

Traditions of Dartmoor—A Grim Story—Tavistock—Monks and Scenery—A Goth—Old Bridges—A Miraculous Escape—A Hilly Town—A wild bit of Road—Boscastle—The Cornish Coast—A planless Place—An Old-World Legend—We come across a Character—King Arthur's Castle—The Mystery of the Sea—Old Trevena—An ancient Saxon Church—Cornish Fanes—A practical Locality—The Highest Mountain in Cornwall!—Where King Arthur fell—Camelford—Weather Vanes—Penryn—Prehistoric Enigmas—Moorland Scenery, its Solitude and Silence—Curious Rocks.

STRANGE stories are told of lost and benighted travellers starved to death on the lone wilds of Dartmoor. These possibly have gained in weirdness and dreadfulness by time; each tale has probably, since it was first related, been embellished by successive tellers. Most of these stories, blood-curdling as some are, are possibly founded upon sundry actual incidents; but how much of what we hear is true, or how to make the proper allowance for added 'facts,' it is difficult to know. Traditions of travellers, both afoot and on horseback, storm-overtaken and overwhelmed in treacherous bogs, starved, frozen, or suffocated to death—of skeletons of missing people found buried in the morasses long years after their almost forgotten fate—are readily to be gathered by a good listener from local gossips. One terribly grim story is commonly related of a poor unfortunate traveller; and grim though it is, as his name is given, and the date when the shocking

occurrence took place, it is probably the best authenticated one we heard, which, by the way, may not be saying much. It appears that a certain gentleman who lived at Plymstock essayed to cross the moor on horseback one bleak winter's noon, in spite of the warnings he had as to the danger of the enterprise, owing to the lateness of the hour and the uncertainty of the weather. Having safely compassed about half of his journey, he was caught in a blinding snowstorm, and is supposed to have lost the track altogether, no extraordinary feat under the circumstances. At last, utterly exhausted in the fruitless endeavour to arrive somewhere, his horse in no better condition than himself, they both sank to the ground, or rather into a morass. Days afterwards his body was discovered by search parties beside that of his dead horse, and upon him was found scrawled on the back of a letter his last wishes in the shape of a will—this scrawled in blood, the blood of his faithful steed, which he had killed for the purpose. There is a tragedy for you!

Of course the weird story may not be true, or only partially true; still, such tales are hereabouts received as gospel, and if you are bold enough to express a doubt as to their genuineness, you are looked upon as something worse than a heretic. Unfortunately, as a rule, the dates of these occurrences are extremely difficult to arrive at, nobody seems to know exactly when this or that happened. 'It was a long while ago now, I cannot say for certain just when,' or 'My father used to tell of a man, it were afore my time,' or 'It may be a dozen years ago, more or less, I cannot rightly say,' and so forth, is the general method of beginning the story; this deplorable indefiniteness of dates is, to say the least,

annoying if not suspicious, especially as, the story once well 'under way,' the most minute particulars are gone into, and if at all of a horrible nature lovingly gloated over.

Still, for all this, several lives have been at one time and another lost upon the moor, especially in the winter time, by people who have attempted to cross some of its less frequented portions. Not that such is by any means a difficult feat in clear weather, as the different tors form most excellent and distinctive landmarks—the only thing is to give the morasses a wide berth. But an ample margin of time should be allowed to meet all emergencies, so that daylight may not fail. In summer time it is the suddenly rising and blinding mists, obliterating all things, that cause the danger. In winter, of course, snowstorms and cold are to be most dreaded. And one can never tell when these may come. You need not go to Switzerland to make ravens' food, it can be done quite as readily at home on Dartmoor.

Tavistock is another very pleasant Devonshire town; almost all Devon towns seem pleasant places, perhaps just a trifle dull to a person used to London, but then one cannot get everything; were there not some drawback to different spots we might be all living in the same part of the world, which would not be a thing to be desired. Tavistock, wood and hill girt, surrounded by a well-cultivated country, this latter brightened up by a little sparkling river, had a charming and cheerful appearance to us, even seen in the rain, a severe test. After our wild drive over the dismal desolation of Dartmoor, it looked a veritable 'Beauty sleeping in the lap of Horror.'

There being a river here as well as a lovely stretch of country, of course the knowing monks of old had discovered the spot—trust them for not missing it! They certainly had an eye for scenery, and truly they selected some of the most charming nooks and sequestered vales in Britain in which to raise their sacred piles. Whatever their faults and shortcomings, the early monks loved the beautiful—witness how lovingly they carved the meaningless stone into the resemblance of natural objects, putting life and feeling into that which was dead. Often, indeed, a simple pillar became, by the exquisite chisel-work bestowed upon it, a living poem, beautifully perfect, seeming almost as though the leaves had not been carved, but, by some magic, real ones transformed into stone. Then the sculpture and paintings within the churches were the poor man's only books, 'sermons in stones' and histories in pictures were such to him. Now he gets his art in penny almanacs, papers, and books, machine-made and multiplied by the million, cheap and trashy. We have much to boast of in this nineteenth century of universal progress—how much better off we are than our forefathers! Why, I was even shown the other day a quantity of so-called carved oak, machine-produced, 'to decorate the interior of a fine church,' the supposed carvings in relief of which were simply some composition stamped out under pressure; 'and mind you,' said the owner, 'you can't tell it from the real thing, and it only costs a third as much.' I could only reply, I thought it dear at that; the moulded figures were mechanical, and monotonously repeated, and the sham—sham in a church too—certainly did not deceive me. This progress, indeed! I would rather have had a third

of good carving at the price, than so much rubbish. Shams are worse than worthless, they are wrong; deceptions are always to be despised. There are, however, shams and shams. A gilt picture frame no one would condemn, for it only professes to be gilt, and serves a useful purpose. There is no false pretence about such, it is not intended to deceive. A gilt chain, a false diamond, however, are, and therefore they are abominations. In the same way a painted door is an innocent sham, for we all know what it means; though the conduct of people who, having wood, will first paint it over to hide the material, and then grain it like wood again, is to me strangely absurd.

Then, too, the river at Tavistock completed the attractions and qualifications of the spot for the monks. A river was a necessity to them in order that they might be able to obtain their fish on Fridays, when they fasted—or feasted was it?

Only the desecrated ruins of the ancient abbey now remain to tell of its former grandeur; still, what there is has great interest. A sad fate befell one of the most interesting and best preserved portions of the ruins. A certain Goth who shall be nameless—for some people would rather, I verily believe, have an evil notoriety than none at all—actually pulled down the beautiful old chapter-house and used the stones to build an ugly residence. This wretched Goth is dead now, and so can do no further harm, but, alas! the fine old structure (said to have been one of the most chaste in England) can never be restored. It would have been a blessing had he never been born, at least he should have come into existence in another hemisphere, some part of the New World, where he

might have pulled down and raised buildings to his heart's 'content and done no hurt. It must not be forgotten that the Tavistock monks were the earliest printers in England; two of their works are still extant, one a copy of Boëthius's 'Consolations of Philosophy,' the other a proof of the 'Statutes of the Stannaries.'

England is a well-watered country, it abounds in rivers and streams, Devon and Cornwall especially; these necessitate bridges, most of which are charming time-worn structures, altogether delightfully picturesque objects. Some of the more important ones frequently show great beauty in design and proportion, and skill in construction. Of these, those in the vicinity of old abbeys were doubtless the work of the monks, and this may account for their gracefulness. Others, where history is silent, have been strangely ascribed to the devil, though why his satanic majesty should be credited with the good work of bridge-building is to me somewhat of a puzzle. Some of the old stone bridges crossing minor streams in one springing arch (Wales rejoices in a number of these) are of ruder construction, and for this very reason, perhaps, the most picturesque of any; frequently they are ivy-clad, more frequently than not, truly gems of beauty, with their romantic rocky surroundings, always forming pleasing pictures, as artists are well aware. On a certain road, northward from Tavistock, exists, at a spot called Lydford, a bridge of this latter kind, crossing a narrow chasm. One day, during a flood, the centre of this gave way, leaving a yawning space of some ten feet. It happened that late on the night following the occurrence a traveller on horseback arrived at Tavistock. The ostler, to be civil, and merely

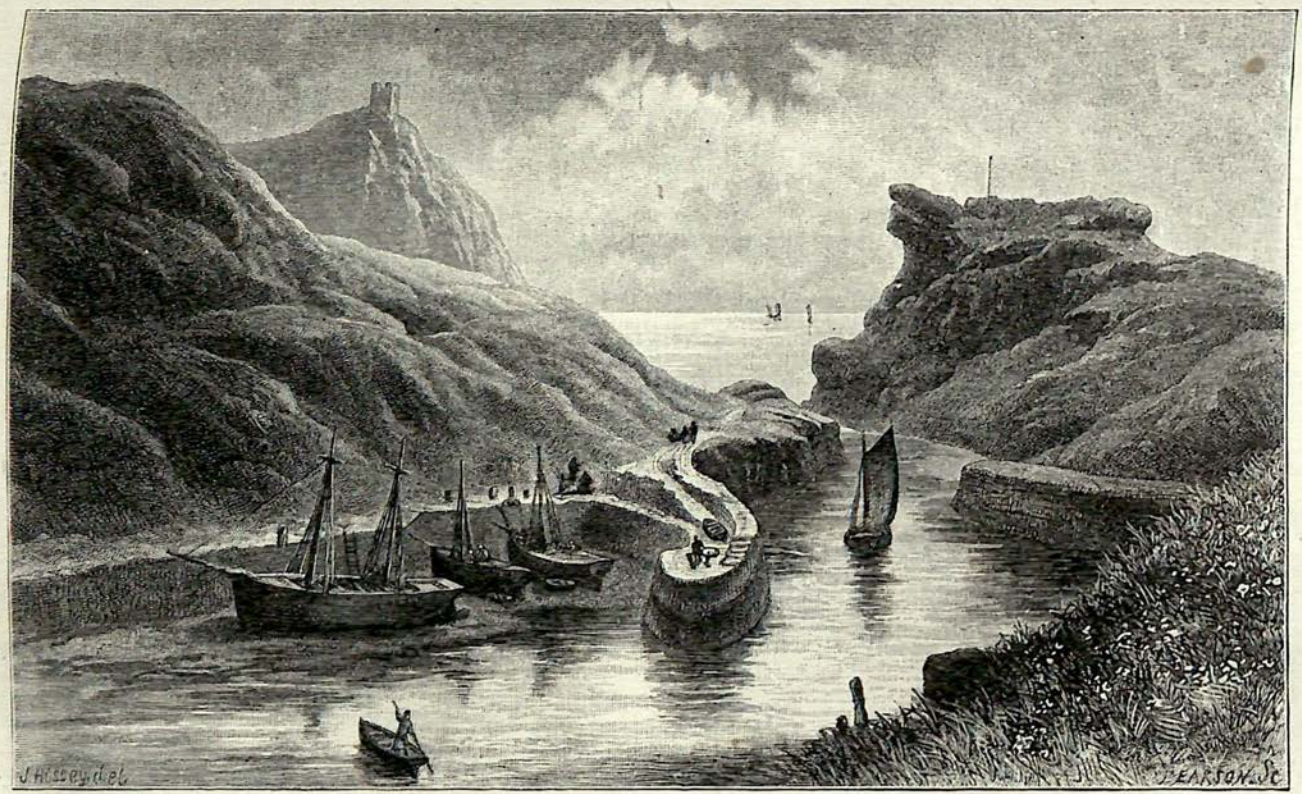
for conversation's sake, asked him where he had come from, and upon hearing the road he had taken, the ostler looked at him aghast. 'Why, whatever is the matter?' exclaimed the rider; 'there's surely nothing very wonderful in a strange traveller arriving here on horseback late at night. Bless you, my good fellow, I'm no highwayman!' It was only when the ostler told him the condition that the bridge he must have crossed was in that the horseman understood the cause of his astonished gaze, or realised the extreme peril he had been in, and the truly miraculous escape he had had. Then he remembered that his horse had taken a sudden frantic leap on the way, as though frightened at some object. This is, I believe, a perfectly true story, and can be verified. Perhaps it is one of the most remarkable escapes of the kind on record, for neither the rider nor the horse knew anything of the road beforehand, and the night was pitch dark.

Our next stage was to Launceston, locally pronounced 'Launston,' on the Cornish principle (not altogether unknown in other parts of the kingdom) of reducing names to their uttermost minimum. The town is a hilly one, with steep streets and a fine old church, crowned with the ruins of a grey old castle, and surrounded by romantic scenery. What more could a traveller in search of the picturesque desire?

Kind reader, reluctantly I find I must somewhat hurry over Cornwall. Our pleasant drive through it, properly described, would easily fill a book in itself; so, indeed, would a tour through any English county, or even, for that matter, any one week of our travels; but where all is so abounding in interest, the difficulty is to know what to leave out. However, space tells

me I must hasten on, or my one volume will be lengthened into two, or, were I to lovingly dwell on all that we saw and experienced, many more. So should you by chance have travelled any portion of our most enjoyable journey so far, and note that I have missed describing many things of interest on the way—as I have done and must still further do—you will know the cause, not that the interest of the spot or the beauty of the scene were lost upon us, but that space failed me. Therefore, for the reasons above given, kindly find us at Boscastle, after a long and pleasant drive from Launceston. The particulars of the road I must compress by saying that it was wildly beautiful—to us at least. Each person has his own particular ideas as to scenery, and to some I know inland Cornwall is dull and monotonous. We found it not so. No country, however bleak or bare, is ever dull or monotonous to us, save the few exceptions of dead treeless levels with a perfectly straight road, all before and behind revealed, and no pleasant surprises possible—truly *dead* levels. Fortunately this most undesirable combination of evils is a rarity, and certainly never met with in hilly Cornwall, where the roads seem to delight, as do their Devonshire neighbours, in ceaseless climbing up and down, and never-ending windings.

Though portions of the county of Cornwall are barren looking, and much of it is both wild and rugged, it is by no means all so. There are within the borders of the county charmingly wooded glens, and cultivated vales rich in crops and verdure and smiling prosperity. These contrast delightfully with the bleaker portions, refreshing the eye by the change.



BOSCASTLE.

The character of the Cornish coast is, however, altogether grand, and though impressive to the land-dweller, is inhospitable and inhuman to the sea-tossed mariner. Great granite cliffs tower over the wild tumultuous waste of waters, at the feet of which crags are cruel rocks; on these many a good ship has left her wooden ribs, many a gallant life been lost. Yet here and there, in marked contrast to all this ruggedness, are peaceful secluded little bays, with the whitest and smoothest of sands, sands that would not hurt a baby's tender foot. In these not seldom a hardy fisherman's cottage or two may be discovered hidden away under the shelter of the mighty cliffs, dragged up well in front of whose lowly homes are their much patched and weather-beaten boats, safely out of reach of the storm-driven waves. For storms in these parts spring up suddenly, treacherously, with scant warning, rushing from off the broad ocean, eagerly destructive, and woe then to the unprepared. I saw upon one occasion the boat of one of these men who carelessly had trusted to good fortune and a calm evening, and left his little smack close by the shore, taken up and literally made match-wood of on the rocks. Whatever else in the world you may trust, put not your faith in a Cornish sea.

Boscastle, what a quaint little town to be sure! Town is it, or only a village? What a romantic spot; what a curious rock-inclosed, tiny haven it possesses; how peaceful the small land-locked harbour looks, with hardly a ripple upon its stilly waters, as smooth almost as a tree-sheltered village pond, whilst without a gale is blowing, and the sea surges solemnly against the mighty barrier cliffs, in loud repeated thunder tones,

the dull boom, boom, boom of the wrathful breakers being wafted inland by the ocean-borne breezes. What a contrast, ceaseless turmoil and placid tranquillity, and all within a stone's throw!

Yes, Boscastle is a strange, foreign-looking place, un-English, un-continental too for that matter. I use the word foreign as describing a kind of alien amongst English towns; yet I must not forget that England has many curious odd nooks and corners, out of the track of railways that is, for these soon manage to do away with all romance and individuality wherever they come. Quaint old Bristol is growing as ugly now as Sheffield or Wolverhampton or any other of our prosperous railway-developed towns. May the iron road never come to Boscastle! It is certainly not a very probable contingency, but in these days it is always the improbable that happens.

Boscastle is one of those places that appear to have been built anyhow, upon no plan whatever, or if there ever was a plan, it must have been one of the most incomprehensible sort. But dearly do I love such planless places; their happy want of uniformity causes a picturesque confusion, a fortunate irregularity, a delight in disorder as it were, which is so charming, because so uncommon in this mechanical square-and-rule-ordered age. Then Boscastle, like most other old Cornish coast villages, has its traditions. The age-darkened squat, square, and substantial church tower, that so strangely crowns one of the bold projecting headlands 'open to the four winds of heaven,' a welcome landmark to the sea-tossed navigator, never had any bells, and is silent still. Who is there that has not heard the legend connected with this?

The town takes its name from the ancient family of the Barons de Bottreaux, who came originally from Normandy and built a strong castle here. It appears, according to the time-honoured legend, that the church at Tintagel possessed a fine peal of bells, and the Lord of Bottreaux declared that his church should also have as good a one. So he caused some to be cast in London, and they were sent hither by sea. The ship had a stormy passage, and on coming into sight of Boscastle headland the pious pilot remarked, 'We should thank God for having given us a safe passage.' 'Thank rather your own skill, you fool,' replied the profane captain, with a terrible oath. Whereupon the winds once more suddenly arose, and the vessel, unable to make the harbour, was dashed to pieces on the rocks at its entrance. Only the devout pilot out of all the crew escaped, he being thrown upon a projecting rock unscathed, whence he clambered safely to the top of the crags. So at least the olden story runs. I am afraid that if such sudden retributive justice were now-a-days to befall the ships of hard-swearing captains, the number of vessels reported missing would be woefully added to. But times are changed.

Even to this day, in this prosaic, unbelieving nineteenth century, some of the ancient inhabitants of the spot are yet to be found who still declare that upon tempestuous nights, and always before a wreck takes place, they can plainly hear above the sounding surging waves, and in spite of the sad sighing of the soughing winds, the solemn, sombre tolling of the sunken Bottreaux bells, the very ones which went to the bottom in the ill-fated ship. So, as they say, the legend must be true, and who can argue against such

positively recorded facts? And who, moreover, would be so hard-hearted as not to listen kindly, ay, and attentively also, to the antique tradition as related by the superstitious legend-loving mariner, or, listening to him, to show any shadow of a doubt as to his belief in the reality of his statement?

Our inn here, as was to be expected so far from railways, was most comfortable, and the bill was moderate. Indeed, we found it to be almost the invariable rule, the farther from the rail the better the fare, the more ample the attention, the lower the charges, and the greater the civility. The iron horse has a great many sins to answer for; not one of the least of these is, it has caused the decadence of that deservedly far and long famed institution of our ancestors, the genuine old English coaching hostelrie. Before or since there has been nothing like to them.

It was at our comfortable inn here that we came across a strange and by no means agreeable character, but a character to be met with, alas! ever and again—a man who had evidently, as he boastingly let everyone know, 'made his own fortune.' No harm in that, great the credit rather; but one does not always care to hear from a stranger full particulars as to his horses and carriages, the number of servants he keeps, and generally the greatness of his establishment. But this pompous individual, whom we met in the public coffee-room, seemed to button-hole all whom he could get to listen to him, and then informed them *nolens volens* of his wealth, how he made it and spent it—altogether one of the most objectionable persons it has ever been my fate to run across.

I quietly tried to avoid him. As it was wet,

and we did not indulge in a private sitting-room, I brought one of my paintings into the coffee-room to finish and touch up a little, which I attempted to do at a secluded side-table, right out of everybody's way. Presently, however, the quick eye of the rich man observed me, and playing with his very massive watch-chain, he walked over to the table and glanced at what I was doing. 'Ah,' he remarked, 'you're one of those artist chaps, are you?' The tone of his voice was disagreeably condescending, as though he were doing me an honour, as an artist, in addressing me at all. 'Ah,' he continued, 'let me see it, will you? I buy a lot of pictures.' I was almost tempted to remark here, 'Indeed, then I suppose you are a picture-dealer?' but with difficulty held my peace. Then he went on: 'Got some fine old masters at 'ome—a Rubens, a Titian, and some few others. You fellows can't paint like them now, can yer?' I could not help thinking to myself all the time he was speaking, what a good time of it some of those 'cute Wardour Street dealers must have had. 'Ah!' he began again. He always appeared to commence his observations with an 'Ah!' I suppose he thought it sounded somewhat grand. 'Ah! Boscastle, the harbour, rocks; not half bad. Now I'm a bit of a judge, you know; I flatter myself I know something about paintings.' The sketch was in reality a very poor one; poor even for me, and I was vainly attempting to improve it a little if possible. 'Now I always like to encourage art.' All the while he was talking in a loud tone, so that the people in the room could plainly hear what was said. 'Ah! now what do you want for it? Name your price.' The ostentatious way in which 'Name your price' was uttered was such as to lead a

listener to infer that money was no object with him; he could purchase what he chose. It struck me that a good opportunity offered to take a little of the pomposity out of my unwelcome visitor. So I replied, equally loudly as he had demanded the price, 'Well, it is only a small sketch; say two hundred guineas.' He positively started, he even forgot his 'Ahs.' I kept on quietly painting to avoid smiling. 'Two hundred guineas!' he exclaimed; 'what do you mean?' 'Well, say pounds,' I said, 'and cheap at the price. No one will get it for less' (this was quite true, for the next day I tore it up in disgust). The expression of surprise on the would-be purchaser's face was a study, and a general subdued titter went round the room; whereupon he turned suddenly round and beat a hasty retreat. I wondered greatly, when he had left me in much-desired peace, what he had given for his old masters; thought, too, how hard these artists must have worked to have produced even a tithe of the pictures attributed to them. I imagine if they were to come to life again they would fail to recognise a very large majority of their reputed productions.

At Boscastle we were near to famed Tintagel. And next morning early we started on a pilgrimage to King Arthur's birthplace, to the old, old castle—the most ancient one in Britain—that looks so solemnly and solitarily down from its stern rocky height upon the stormy Cornish sea. Tintagel, what a world of legendary romance is woven in the very name! Tintagel, the home of England's blameless king, her ideal patriot knight, of Ygrayne and Tristram and Iseult, of warriors so famed for valour, generous and brave,

gentle though daring, each '*sans peur et sans reproche*,' beloved yet not envied, so equally renowned that the king established the immortal 'Round Table,' as none deserved precedence of the other. Tintagel, the cradle of our island's ancient chivalry!

All this is Tintagel, this and much more. What a name to conjure with! No wonder we were early on our way that day, for we felt as though we were entering upon hallowed ground, a beloved and legendary land—King Arthur's very own country.

On our way we passed a little fern-and-flower-begirt lane, adown which a tiny stream meandered musically to the sea, half hidden in a green entanglement of idle growing things. In this retired glen the cream-flowered and perfumed meadow-sweet abounded, quivering with every breath of air, looking like bits of sea-foam blown in overland, and lovingly lingering there.

'Which is the way to Tintagel Castle?' we inquired of a native we met on the road. 'Tintagel Castle? It must surely be King Arthur's Castle you wants,' was the reply, particular emphasis being placed on the words, 'King Arthur's Castle.' So, after all these many centuries, this aged ruin is still better known locally by the title of the ancient English king than by its proper topographical name. And so that glorious summer morning we came to old-world Trevena village, where we rested our horses, and wandering down a narrow winding gorge, first caught sight of the gleaming heaving sea; then the dark looming ruin-crowned headland towered up impressively before us to the left, a mass of sombre grey against the tender blue sky. Little now remains of the castle; it is verily

a ruin in ruins. The rugged, weather-worn walls, all time-rent and decayed, that so long have outlived their need, are passing slowly, still surely, away; so fragile now, by long exposure, have the stones become, that they crumble to very dust at the touch of the hand. Tintagel must have been a strong fortress in its day, almost impregnable in fact. Situated on the topmost height of a lofty promontory, whose precipitous sides fall abruptly down to their sea-washed base, on three sides the stronghold was practically unassailable; joined to the mainland on the other side by a narrow neck of ground, this was defended by a deep chasm, across which, it is said, a drawbridge was thrown. Climbing up the headland (a difficult, almost dangerous mount indeed), we were well rewarded for our trouble by a most glorious open, vigorous sea-scape, with a far-stretching iron-bound coast, much caverned and many-bayed, foam-fringed as far as the eye could see—a glorious wide expanse of air and space. All along the vexed sea was chafing against the buttresses of the mighty cliffs; long green white-crested waves came rolling in, breaking incessantly upon the shore; waters eddying and circling, in coiling, frothing masses, in and out of the bases of the crags in bewildering confusion. Even on that fair summer day the sea was restless, tossing uneasily about. What must it be in the wild winter time?

Sea-gulls were wheeling beneath us, darting down ever and again to the watery depths, or sailing out of sight for a time in the caverned recesses below, white and grey in sun and shade, now quivering in the light, making by their brightness the dark cliffs look darker still. Great airs, freshening and salt-laden, swept by us;

it was a veritable atmospheric bath we had there as we stood looking out into an infinity of foam-flecked waters, dancing and sparkling in the sun, but leaden and grey in shade, and green and creamy white where the surges broke unceasingly along the sombre lines of the frowning harbourless coast.

There is always to me a vague sense of mystery in the sea; all things in the world have changed but it. The ocean knows not time nor place, boundless, restless, infinite. Man has left his mark on all else, but the sea bears no record of him, it is just the same now as it was countless centuries ago. Roman triremes, and stately vessels and galleys of old, painted and gilded and wonderful to look upon, have in turn traversed her trackless wastes; they have come and gone, and that is all. The sea is still the same; who could tell from her the things that have been? Another generation comes, the wild, heaving waters know nothing of the past, as they will know nothing of the present when the present is no more.

Ironclads, huge in size, hideous in shape, now float upon the main. Cruelly destructive creations are these latest inventions of man; but these, too, will have their little day. Other contrivances more deadly still, certainly more ugly, if such be possible, will take in due time their places, as they have taken the place of the majestic-looking three-decker. But what recks the ancient ocean of all these ceaseless changes? She alters not her looks nor moods. As our first forefathers saw her, so do we, so will our children after us, for in this changeful world she only changes never. Man has scattered the land all over with his handiworks, from the rude, unhewn, primitive stone erection

to that marvel in buildings, a Gothic cathedral, the perfected beauty of architectural creation, the very masterpiece of excelling loveliness. Everywhere upon the solid earth you may find traces of him. Not so with the watery main; only deep, deep down, at the bottom of the faithless, fathomless sea, hidden for aye from mortal sight, are the broken and shapeless relics of what has been! Only for the moment, when his vessels sail on the deep, does she bear record of man. She is, in truth, his servant, yet his master still.

Up the glen again we retraced our steps to Trevena, after having added another sketch to the already well-stocked book. Backed by wind-swept, lonely uplands, brown, and bleak, and bare, bounded on the other side by the stormy ocean, far away from any large town, near no railways, Trevena seems about as much out of the world as any place in Britain well can be. Here modern progress (with all its advantages, undoubted or doubtful) appears hardly to have penetrated at all. Possibly, on the whole, much as it looked in the long ago, so the sleepy little village does now. Antique it is, and picturesque, with its rough-built cottages constructed of heavy slabs of stones, the same material, only somewhat lighter, doing duty for roofs, these green with mosses, grasses, and the hardy stonecrop. Old and strong such cottages all, tinted with many hues, charmingly irregular in outline, evidently existing for the sake of the painter. Hither then, oh artist! hie thee with thy colours and canvases, and give us these quaint, old-world cottages, these glorious fresh sea-scapes, these crested, confused, surging waters, impressive crags and solemn coast scenes. Simple subjects, simple yet grand, grand and solemn, because

so utterly unadorned. There is no pettiness or prettiness anywhere here, only broad, strong effects, manly and vigorous; none of the drawing-room schoolmaster weakly-washed-in style. Even the humble cottages are massive. *Grand scenery requires grand painting.* Oh! the gloom and grandeur, the glory and the greatness, the massiveness and the mystery of dark Tintagel's mighty castle-crowned and sea worn rock.

Where is now the blest and blameless king, 'whose glory was redressing human wrong'—where are his gallant knights, who erst held high festival within the once proud castle, so decayed and desolate in this our day? Where? Passed away long, long centuries ago, they now are sleeping their last dreamless sleep in unremembered, unnoted graves, but for all that they sleep in their loved England's hallowed soil. They are dead, and yet they are not, for

> To live in hearts we leave behind,
> Is not to die.

Before leaving Trevena we made a pilgrimage to its very ancient and massively substantial Saxon church, which stands conspicuous and solitary upon a bare cliff facing the bleak Atlantic, storm-swept from all quarters. Slight wonder the structure is so solid, it needs be so to stand the buffeting it gets. Truly its tower looks more as though it had been raised for a feudal keep; an edifice intended to resist battery and assault, rather than for a peaceful place of worship. Its walls are thick, and strong, and rough; the windows exceedingly small, round-headed, and deeply set, as of necessity.

How furiously the wintry winds rage here, unrestrained, may be gathered from the fact that the very tombstones have to be protected from the stormy blast's fierce onslaughts by substantial and solid buttresses of masonry. Why was the church built thus, so terribly exposed? A pertinent question surely, when a well-sheltered spot could as easily have been chosen. Doubtless it was so placed to serve as a beacon to passing ships, thus doing double duty as a place of worship and as a danger warning. Possibly also, when roads were few, and those mere tracks, practically non-existent in fact, it served as a landmark as well, to guide the lonely wanderer's feet safely over the wilderness of wild uplands and desolate wastes of misty moors around. Many Cornish churches we noticed have this characteristic of bold observable position and massive construction; frequently all the structure, save the tower, is low, so as to offer as little obstruction to the beating storms as possible.

There is much of antiquarian interest about Trevena, much for the artist and the lover of old England to linger over; but I must not loiter longer here, we have still so much to see, so much there is yet to be described. One spot, however, full of attractions, must not detain us too long; our journey is not half completed yet.

Once more on the road, bleak at first the country was, with gnarled and twisted trees, the work of sea-driven winds; but by degrees it became more and more sylvan, more pleasant to the rest- and rural-loving eye. On our way, at one spot we passed by some extensive and busily noisy slate quarries, an intensely practical locality, by no means beautiful. Here all around was barren, and of a chilly piteous

hue—slates everywhere, a dismal cold grey void. The houses and walls were built of these; stiles, milestones, even the very doors and gate-posts were made of them; it roofs the living and covers the dead—verily a land of slate. Right glad were we to get away from so much ugliness.

A bracing pleasant drive we had that day, the scenery improving each mile of the way, growing softer still and softer, greener and more treeful, varied with distant peeps ever and again of indigo-grey tors, now dark against the white sky, now tender and pale in the light. Stopping at one spot to inquire of a native the name of one of these tors, to our query he replied, 'It's —— tor,' I have forgotten now which he said, but not his added remark of, 'Why, I'm fairly surprised you don't know it, I thought as everybody did. Why, it's *the highest mountain in Cornwall.*' What could we do but confess our great and woeful ignorance? Here were we, educated English people, actually passing in sight of the mightiest Cornish peak without being aware of the fact! A tor here is a veritable mountain, as in Wales is Snowdon, in Scotland Ben Nevis, in Switzerland Mont Blanc, in Asia are the Himalayas. Height, after all, is only relative. Possibly the man in the moon (if there is such a being) would not think much even of the Himalayas, and certainly an inhabitant of Venus nothing at all. So we tried to look respectfully and gaze astonishedly upon this minor giant, towering to the heaven-soaring height of some thousand feet or so.

Then presently we reached Slaughter Bridge. 'Claughter' our map made it, the only error we had discovered in our most excellent charts during the

whole of our journey. Slaughter Bridge is so called from the last and fatal battle King Arthur fought, which is reported to have taken place at or near this spot, and in which the renowned hero received his death wound, the valiant knights of his Round Table fearlessly fighting, falling, all unyielding, around their loved lord:

> "When all day long the noise of battle roll'd
> Among the mountains by the winter sea,
> Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
> Had fall'n in Lyonnesse about their lord.

All this, too, happened within sight of his own stately castle of stern Tintagel,

> As though no other place on Britain's spacious earth
> Were worthy of his end but where he had his birth.

The next spot of interest on our way was Camelford—'a real live market town,' as the ostler informed us; otherwise we should have been inclined to imagine it merely a large village. Camelford is a place where everybody appears to take a friendly interest, or the reverse, in everybody else. The shops are uncompetitive of course, and even to us, long absent from such attractions, provokingly uninteresting. Needful shops all, not beautiful, nor artistic. In fine, Camelford is a very proper, prosaic, dull mite of a town; characterless—not ugly by any means, nor yet at all attractive; not dirty, still certainly not especially clean; not picturesque, nor yet altogether commonplace. Much, indeed, like some men and women, with whom you cannot exactly find fault, but still feel that if they were only a little better or a little

worse they would be vastly more interesting. So is Camelford.

'Upon a weather-vane here, on the largest building (not great, this latter, on that account), in place of the time-honoured cock is a camel. A camel mid-air! not exactly the animal for the place—about as inconsistent there as an elephant would be. We could only suppose it was so employed because of the name of the town, Camelford. If so, a strange jumping at a wrong conclusion. The river here (the Camel) is truly fordable, hence the title; not, however, meaning a passage for camels. I very greatly doubt if this useful creature has ever been seen in or near the place; certainly not unless in a travelling menagerie. Speaking about weather-vanes, it may not be generally known why the cock is, or at any rate was, so almost universally employed thereon. Vanes originally were chiefly placed upon the tops of church towers, the cock being selected as the emblem of watchfulness, a constant reminder to the priest that he should ever be on the watch over his flock.

But this is not hurrying along, as I needs must do. In this respect I find myself ever failing; it is hard to hasten on and leave so many things unrecorded. But space is inexorable. Books of india-rubber, conveniently expanding, have yet to be invented. So please to find us in due course at Penryn, close to Falmouth's famous town, after our journey thither by the old coach road. A long bleak drive it was, through much bare and barren land, a road of many ups and downs—all ups and downs I think I may say; yet with all its desolation a delightful drive, enjoyable because of its very wildness, unevenness, and uncertainties. Our way led us

past many dismal, dreary wastes, silent and solitary, affording one a sense of limitless space and boundless air, through the queerest of little villages, uncouth, uncommon, past pretty out-of-the-way spots, unheeded now, when everyone goes by rail; scenery altogether most thoroughly Cornish, and of a kind not to be found elsewhere. On past moors bestrewn with bleached boulders, and scattered over with numerous prehistoric structures, rude, enigmatical. Amongst these a goodly proportion of Druidical remains, so called, where, if we may credit the poet, in the dim far past

> Mysterious rites were solemnised,
> . . . . .
> . . . Rites of such strange potency
> As, done in open day, would dim the sun
> Though enthroned in noontide brightness.

Moorland scenery is always more or less impressive to me. The moors have remained changeless through long centuries of change, aboriginal almost even now as in King Arthur's time; as oppressively lonely, as intensely still, nearly as trackless as when the builders of those strange monuments dwelt here in the unrecorded long ago.

If in the narrow lanes of Devonshire a longing for a horizon came to us continually, as it did, here we had our cravings gratified to perfection. Our vision ranged over vast undulating breadths, over mighty sweeps of moors, rising and falling in great curved lines; limited only by the fading circling blue, where sky and land blended in one uncertain whole.

Solitude and silence are the characteristics of these lone wastes, their utter stillness is almost startling; on them you seem as though you were traversing some

primeval world on which man had not yet appeared. A stillness only broken by the silvery splashing of some unsuspected stream, or the plaintive moaning of the storm-winds amongst the rocks; sounds that somehow seem only to emphasise the otherwise supreme silence.

How suggestive, too, are they of the immensity of space—space over which vast cloud shadows and gleams of sunshine come and go, the passing rays revealing here and there stray pools, which for the moment gleam out of their sombre surroundings of peaty black soil, like massive pools of molten silver. Mighty rocks also, up-piled, weather-worn, blackened, scarred and frost-rent, strew these wild wildernesses. Strange forms some of these assume (the Cheesewring is a good example of their eccentric shapes), wonderfully curious; such as one would imagine a madman might design, or a bad nightmare evolve. But the bracing atmosphere of these spreading uplands must not be forgotten; light, cool, and clear is the air, sparkling and bright as champagne. Purity itself; so fresh and invigorating, it makes the mere fact of breathing a pleasure—a new experience.

Not all or wholly barren our way, however; sheltered nooks, and quiet vales, and deep-set glens there were ever and again, these literally thronged (I can find no better word) with luxuriant profuse masses of dense vegetation, composed of leafy trees, thickly growing shrubs, flourishing ferns, countless flowers, and a wonderful variety of grasses, weeds, and plants. It was as though all this wealth of tender greenery had been swept from off the brown bare moors and crowded into these sheltered spots.

CHAPTER XIII.

Helstone—The History of a Name—A Holiday without Expense—Kynance Cove—A lovely Bay—The Sea—The 'Fatal Gift of Beauty'—Serpentine Rocks—The Advantages of being able to Draw—A Universal Language—The most Southern Point of England—The Smugglers of old, their Haunts and Doings—A curious State of Affairs—Tales of Modern Shipwrecks—A Haunted Country—Tregeagle and his Works—The Cornish Heather—A Chat with an old Sailor—Daring Deeds—England's Seamen—St. Michael's Mount—A Wonder-working Chain and Well—Marazion—Penzance—The Logan Rock—A Regular Nuisance—Our *ultima Thule.*

We made an evening drive of it from Penryn to Helstone. The western sky was growing golden when we started, so we did not dally on our way, not caring to be benighted in so out-of-the-world a region.

The road was rough, the country still wild, wild yet seemingly tame, compared to the vast extending wilderness of waste moorlands we had been accustomed to of late. Mine-workings were visible here and there, many—nearly all it seemed to us—disused, deserted. The gaunt walls of the engine-houses and the tall chimneys standing up by their side looked the picture at that hour of darkened desolation. These loomed up now and again before us, telling out sharply, densely black, against the luminous sky; silent all, no throbbing of the never-resting pumping-engines, no signs of life near them, save a stray bat or so, or a ruin-loving owl. One of these latter we passed close to our way,

blinking at us in a curiously vacant manner, dreamingly observing us out of his big sleepy eyes; but he otherwise heeded us not, nor troubled himself to move as we approached him—the very picture of listless laziness was he.

At that hour a sense of mystery was all around, broad indefinable shadows everywhere mistily blending all things; our eyes were perplexed in the continual endeavour to make out but partially discernible objects. A ghost-like, unreal sort of world we seemed to be travelling through, gloomy, solemn, solitary; growing gloomier and still gloomier as the darkening twilight gathered, oppressing the burdened world with its mysteries. We were not altogether sorry when our stage at last came to an end and Helstone was reached, where we found comfortable and cheerful quarters at the quiet inn. All the more cheerful seemed these in contrast with the cold bleak world we had so recently passed through.

Helstone is said to have taken its name from a large mass of granite rock that used to stand within the borders of the town, the tradition being that his satanic majesty once upon a time picked up this huge piece of rock on one of the Cornish moors and was bearing it away somewhere. When the occurrence took place or whither he was carrying the stone we could not learn; but these are trifles. Just, however, when he came to this spot he chanced, quite unexpectedly, to run across St. Michael, whereupon the Devil took to precipitate flight, dropping the mighty boulder that he might flee the faster. And as the town was built upon the spot, in recollection of this startling event, it was so named Helstone. Why Helstone, not Devilstone?

Who shall say after this that there is not a meaning in the names of places?

The historic rock remained where it was for generations; but a practical age, heedless of traditions and old romance, blasted it into useful fragments, and utilised these to build a commonplace Assembly Hall, in which structure alone now pieces of the once famous stone may be viewed.

The ostler of our inn informed us that some years ago 'two gents from London' came down here and spent a very pleasant holiday, living on the best the hotel could provide, champagne included, and all gratis. And this is how the said 'gents' proceeded. Armed with sundry knowing-looking surveying instruments, they secured rooms at the inn, stating that they had been sent down to survey for a new line of railway from Falmouth to Marazion, which was to pass through Helstone, with a branch to the Lizard, for the benefit of tourists. Fortunately for the investing public—who, I verily believe, would subscribe to a line to the moon provided they were promised by prospectus a big dividend—the line was a myth. But the landlady knew not this, indeed nobody seems at all to have suspected them to be anything else than what they represented themselves. Possibly the landlady was only too pleased to entertain two such excellent customers, who were most liberal in their orders; as they well might be, for they never, it would appear, had the remotest intention of paying for anything. Each day these two individuals went out exploring the country round about, making free use of the hotel conveyances. Ostensibly these excursions were to select the best line of country for the

bogus railway; in reality they were simply 'holiday-making,' and generally managed 'to enjoy themselves immensely.' Having spent a fortnight thus, these two clever youths one day disappeared, and, needless to say, have never been heard of since, or seen in these parts; and the bill still remains unpaid. It struck us that the 'two gents' in question showed a considerable amount of ingenuity and originality, as well as exceeding meanness, in procuring free and luxurious quarters for their holiday. Such talents might surely be put to better advantage.

From Helstone we made an excursion to the Lizard Head and to Kynance Cove—a sheltered nook of silvery sands, sands smooth as a floor, smooth without being uninterestingly even, inclosed by those wonderfully coloured serpentine cliffs, all red and green, complementary colours contrasting, and when washed and polished by the sea and still glistening with the wet, lovely exceedingly. A very fairies' bay, or rather, perhaps, it would be more consistent to say a mermaids' haunt, with cool, green caves, rainbow-hued by reflected rays of light, for dressing-rooms; sea-weed decorated these as well with rare tints of ruby and emerald, with mirrors also in the shape of rock-bound pools, reflecting all things as in a glass, save when for a moment wind-rippled, then sparkling as though diamond-strewn.

The day was perfect for the scene, a happy combination of circumstances: overhead a sky of the purest ultramarine, across which light feathery clouds were slowly sailing, so slowly that their tranquil motion suggested only rest. At our feet the baby waves were lapping, lapping gently on the beach most hushfully,

making soothing, half-mournful melody, a soft whispering pleasant indeed to listen to, reposeful in its drowsy, continued monotony. And the tints, too, of sky and water were as beautiful a blue, as pure and deep as ever enchanted weary traveller on the southern Mediterranean shore, so sung of by poets and world-belauded. Will no one sing the praises of these glorious Cornish seas, so exquisite in summer calm, so sublime in winter storm, playful and majestic, peaceful and wrathful? This kindly friend of old England, this ruthless enemy of her foes, our bounding guardian ocean, I love it well in all its many moods, even when dull and leaden-hued, mist-laden, or when, storm-driven, wailing mournfully on some forsaken melancholy shore.

The tints of the sky and sea and rocks that day were simply marvellous and manifold. Not always thus, a native said, still often so. 'We likes such weather, it brings lots of towerists down.' Practical, but unromantic man! Far away the sea stretched, a space of rippling blue, sparkling joyously in the sunshine, with many mimic flashing fires, as though it were all over star-sprinkled. A long line of gleaming golden brightness on the distant horizon alone told where the azure of the sky and sea met. Nearer shore the blue became insensibly a lovely green, clear and colourful—a pure aquamarine.

A lovely spot is Kynance Cove, with its smooth sands and magically tinted caverned rocks, a spot to be seen, not imagined; for once the real is more beautiful than the ideal. Poet and artist together could not conceive anything more wonderfully lovely. Of course, Kynance requires a fine day to bring out all its scenic perfectness.

Fine weather, as the native told us, has one drawback—it brings down a host of noisy tourists. This is the inevitable penalty of fame. Such renown in the same manner destroys the romantic quiet and any poetical impressions one might otherwise gather from England's countless beauty spots. This is, perhaps, the one especial reason why I love and prize so dearly, and above more famous ones, the many charming scenes, unheeded and unnoted, this land of ours abounds in. Notoriety, railways, and guide books, all combined, have ruined, alas! but too completely numerous heart- and eye-delighting places. Tintern and Fountains Abbeys, amongst the spoilt multitude, are excellent examples. Had it been possible, therefore, so selfish were we, we should have infinitely preferred to have had all this natural loveliness to ourselves; truly the stream of laughing sightseers most effectually destroyed the romantic seclusion of the scene. 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder,' and verily we should have loved the tourists infinitely better had they been far away. But what right had we to complain of them? What were we ourselves but tourists? But the worst of it all is, those that come to these rare spots are, as a rule, wholly unappreciative. A Rosherville Gardens kind of place to spend a happy day in would delight the majority of them equally—perhaps better; but the 'fatal gift of beauty' has stamped such spots as places to be seen, and seen and ruined they are accordingly.

The serpentine rock is very fine, rich and varied in colour, pleasant to look upon. Sundry small works here manufacture this into candlesticks, ring-stands, paper-weights, and other useless and inappropriate articles; these for the special benefit of visitors, who

appear to invest largely in them, much to the profit of the makers. It is wonderful to see the many strange shapes into which the unfortunate rock is tortured. I have often wondered what people do with all these things when they get them home. What becomes of the countless mementoes of their travels? One might as well ask what becomes of the endless multitude of pictures, good and bad—the vast majority, alas! the latter—that are created year after year in such ceaseless profusion. Though pressed to purchase some of these 'art productions,' as the would-be vendor declared them to be, we hard-heartedly refused, and so saved our pockets, and ourselves escaped being encumbered with so much worthless dead weight.

Fortunately being able to sketch, we deemed a water-colour drawing a more pleasing and valuable remembrance. One amongst the numerous advantages of being able to paint is the power to take any particular or favourite view of a spot, not perhaps to be obtained in a photograph, or by any other mode; besides, you thus always preserve your impression of the scene, and how it at the time affected you. To put yourself into your sketch (if I may be allowed the expression) is the soul of painting—to realise a scene as you saw and felt it, and this from your own, not some one else's especially selected point of view. Who does not know by heart the wearying repetitions of certain famous spots photographed or painted eternally from one standpoint, as though there were no other? It is to me passing strange how few educated people, clever in all other respects, should be unable to make even the simplest sketch of any spot or place they may wish. And yet, if it were only taught early at school, drawing

is as simple and easy a talent to acquire as writing, vastly more so than Latin or Greek, and infinitely more useful. Yet how many children are excused from being taught drawing, forsooth, because they have no taste for it! I never yet heard of a boy getting off Latin or arithmetic for this reason. People seem to possess a curious idea, that to have a child taught drawing necessitates making him an artist. Just as consistently they might refuse to let their children learn to write because they had no desire that they should become authors. One result is about as probable as the other. An artist, even more than a poet, 'is born, not made.'

There is an infinity of pleasure and usefulness to be derived from a knowledge of drawing, without possessing the necessary skill and technical abilities of the professional artist, which are to be acquired only by much experience and constant study. Paintings may be both pleasurable and profitable without being up to exhibition standard. Drawing, too, is an accomplishment once acquired not readily forgotten. How useful also! Frequently a few rough pencil outlines will describe a spot or thing better far than a lengthened laboured description or pages of tedious writing. Indeed, no amount of words, volumes even unlimited, could possibly give the idea easily conveyed by a minute or two's sketch. Say, for instance, you have a certain plan you wish to make clear, a bit of work you require doing to especial design, a view you wish to show to a friend. Let this latter be as simple as possible, a lake it may be, with mountains at the back and clouds above. How could you faithfully describe these in mere words? To convey thus all the changing varied forms of sky and hill and water would be

to attempt an impossibility. Yet all this may be done readily by aid of the pencil in a few moments—all, be it understood, that is necessary to give the impression and knowledge required.

Truly drawing is a great and helpful friend, a trusty one that never deserts you, always ready at need, ever at command, pleasure-affording to others it may be as well. Latin and Greek are very good things in their way—excellent; but the power to draw is more excellent still. This should have first place, not of course despising or neglecting the others.

Then the language of the pencil is universal, the same in all countries and climes, equally comprehended by all. James Nasmyth, the famous engineer of steam-hammer renown, relates how when travelling in Sweden in places where he was unable to speak the language, and where no one could understand his English, he would at his inn draw in his sketch-book what he wished for dinner. For example, on one occasion he drew a table with a cloth spread thereon, with a cooked fowl (smoking hot) upon it, with vegetables, bread, cheese, and salt, and a bottle of ale and glass, then completing his work by figuring a clock with the hands pointing to the hour he required his meal. This was readily understood. In like manner he ordered a conveyance, by drawing a horse and carriage, noting the time as before. In Russia also, in like circumstances, his pencil never failed to procure him what he required; it ever proved his unfailing faithful interpreter.

From Kynance we wandered overland to the famous Lizard Head, and there between the light-house and the sea we stood upon the southernmost point of Great Britain, looking into aërial space. Grand was

the sky-bounded prospect ; the far-spreading sea-scape was simply eye-entrancing to gaze upon, so suggestive of infinity, of fetterless freedom, of limitless expanse.

But the grand cliff scenery here—grand I have said, stupendous a local guide book we observed termed it (adjectives cost nothing)—can only be properly seen and fully comprehended from a boat. On the other hand, the far-extending ocean panorama can only be had from above, and as we had not time to do both, rightly or wrongly we chose the latter view. To me there is always a peculiar charm in a far-off horizon. The eye, confined for so great a portion of the year to narrow streets, sadly bounded in on all sides, rejoices, schoolboy like, in such wanton freedom ; it delights in liberty.

Stretching northward from us, long leagues away, was the dark weather-beaten, iron-bound coast, much indented, many-bayed, inhospitable, irregular, rugged, foam-fringed as far as our eye could range, the white edge of the land-lapping waves, wind-woven into traced patterns of creamy white, looking like so much rarely designed embroidery. The little boats below, and ships on the distant sea, were space-dwarfed all. How small and insignificant they appeared viewed from our vantage height—toy boats merely! Even yonder mighty liner, homeward bound, an epitome of the world, a little town afloat, seemed a toy boat too. Owing to our elevated standpoint, our horizon was a high one; beneath us were many leagues of restless sea, chequered with cloud shadows and gleams of golden light, following one another, incessantly changing forms and places. Flashing all over, gem-like glittered the sparkling sea under the bright sunshine, flecked with

the foam of countless crested wavelets, bewildering in their multitude, vanishing and reappearing, reappearing and vanishing again. But the tourists all without exception went to see the lighthouse interior; more pleasing far to them than all this careless laughing beauty, this pearly grey, silver and spreading opalescent loveliness. Such beauty was too commonplace to note.

The many caverns in the cliffs below this spot were in former times the famous resort of smugglers, who flourished mightily in these remote parts, even in some cases boldly indulging in armed ships. One of these, the 'Happy-go-Lucky,' actually for a time successfully both defied and evaded his Majesty's cruisers; this vessel was well armed, and her crew, knowing that capture meant death, fought her with reckless daring. She was only eventually taken by surprise, being overpowered by an overwhelming force; but this was not accomplished without a desperate struggle. Indeed, so great had the evil become, that the Government of the day sent down Lord Pellew armed with full powers to put an end to the unbearable state of affairs. It chanced one night that he came upon a party running in a cargo, this actually within sight of his ships; but this was not the worst; to his utter astonishment he found some of his own men assisting heartily in the work! One of the chief secrets of the smugglers' successes and long immunity from capture was explained. His Majesty's very preventive men were in friendly collusion with the contrabandists, aiding and abetting them—in the pay of two masters, but it would appear faithful alone to one. Thus the smugglers were kept well informed of all

their enemies' movements, for not only the men but some of the revenue officers were in their pay. Those were the palmy days of smuggling. This discovery necessitated the most severe repressive measures and condign punishment of all captured culprits, and eventually the long existing lawless clique was broken up, not, however, without considerable bloodshed. Once, indeed, the gaol was actually stormed by an armed party, and all the imprisoned smugglers but one released. A curious state of affairs for a civilised country!

Many are the stories of the old smuggling days, and of shipwrecks past and recent, told by the dwellers at the Lizard. At one spot is shown a field wherein nearly two hundred bodies are buried which were washed ashore here from the wreck of a large foreign transport ship. It appears that one day this vessel was driven on the rocks below, and the whole of the crew and passengers drowned, save, strangely enough, two sailors in irons, who had been placed thus by the captain because they had dared to suggest to him that the course he was steering would inevitably lead to disaster—at least, such was the account the two sailors gave of themselves.

Cornwall seems to have been a much-haunted county. The disembodied spirits of both saints and sinners appear at one time or another to have visited almost every spot; their especial delight was playing strange tricks with mighty boulders, and generally behaving themselves in a most unseemly manner, and one terribly upsetting to the nerves of ordinary quiet mortals—if mortals had nerves in those days. It is not pleasant to think of ghosts sporting about in the air,

carrying with them great masses of granite and suddenly dropping these anywhere, or playing at bowls with them across country.

Amongst the many Cornish demons, Tregeagle is perhaps the most famous and ubiquitous; his ghost, too, appears to have lingered on when all the rest were gone, even to this latter century of steam and electricity. At any rate, we came across one or two spots which he is said still to haunt. At one place he was baling the sea with tiny cockle-shells; at another the task was allotted to him of emptying of sand, with his hands, the caverns which were ever kept replenished by the incoming tide; at yet another he was being hunted by spectral dogs everlastingly; these gave the poor tormented spirit no rest; elsewhere again he was endeavouring to complete a journey round an endless circle; and here at the Lizard we learnt he was condemned to weave ropes out of sand upon the seashore—till this impossible feat was accomplished his soul could have no rest. 'Poor creature!' my wife said; 'whatever did he do to be punished so?' There are several stories told of his misdeeds, and these vary in detail; so we had to be content with knowing that he was a very wicked man. The wickedest that ever lived almost, if all that is related of him is true. We gleaned, however, that he had been an unjust steward, cheating his master and robbing the poor. Unjust men's spirits seem now-a-days to reap no such deserts; or is it that there are no unjust stewards in this our honest age? A golden age surely, when mining and other companies are actually promoted by self-denying individuals for the special benefit of poor widows and clergymen, in order

to increase their too small and very limited incomes. Verily, the world has never witnessed such utterly unselfish benevolence before. It is well to live in this our perfect day!

The Lizard district should be a healthy one; swept from all around by the soft pure sea-borne winds, pleasantly tempered even in the winter time. Traditions as to the longevity of its inhabitants are common; and the fact may be further proved from the tombstone legends by those who have faith in such things, and care for the doleful occupation of searching them out, some half obliterated, most in quaint lettering, difficult to decipher as they are. Indeed, it is said that one of the former rectors of Lizard town parish, a certain Thomas Coles, who died there in 1683, had attained the very ripe age of 120 years! a statement apparently fairly well authenticated, but, of course, to be received *cum grano salis*—very much so, some people will doubtless say.

This most southern portion of England consists of a peninsula of elevated granite uplands; in parts a waste, wind-swept, bare, and treeless; barren not so much because of the poorness of the soil, but on account of the fierce storm blasts; for in the sheltered dales wind-protected vegetation is simply luxuriant. The moorland fields are divided, and some little shelter is afforded to the sheep by high strong fences. Strange fences these, consisting neither of stone walls nor familiar hedges, as in the rest of the kingdom, but formed all of earth banks, along the top of which you can readily walk; indeed, such appeared to us to be the regular footpaths in this part of the world. A curious sight it was to see the natives trudg-

ing complacently along high up on the tops of the fences!

Here, too, on this peninsula flourishes the Cornish heather—a distinct species—and, curiously enough, to be found nowhere else in Great Britain. It is altogether a finer plant than the ordinary one, and is restricted wholly to the Serpentine Rock district; thus favouring the assertion of some chemists, that the underlying rock has as much to do with the richness and quality of the crop as the soil itself. The line-limited growth of this Cornish heather is the line of the Serpentine Rock; the upper soil and climate can have nothing to do with it, as these do not vary, or very slightly, from those of the adjacent localities.

This little corner of England is a spot where ancient memories dwell, where superstitious traditions and old-world legends linger long. A railless, townless, treeless land, whose kindly, good-natured inhabitants live in a simple primitive way, fondly clinging to bygone customs; rough outwardly, but within tender-hearted, almost childishly so.

One of the old weather-beaten sailors or fishermen we spoke to, and who seemed as hard as the rock upon which he stood, gruff in voice, rude even, many might deem, in manner, though civil enough in his way, for all that, during our conversation with him, suddenly when we asked if he had any family, replied quite coolly, without a quiver in his voice, 'I had a little one once, but she died and left me all alone.' Very hastily and gruffly this was said; purposely so perhaps—these men do not carry their hearts on their sleeves—but presently we noticed him put up his hand hurriedly to his face to dash away an un-

bidden tear that would come whether he would or no; then he turned aside, as though ashamed of his manly weakness—weak in his very strength. Brave these men are, as a matter of course, and as many a rescued mariner can vouch, who but for them would have found a watery grave. But such life-saving deeds done in angry storm-tossed seas they appear only to deem a natural part of their existence, as little worthy of praise as eating their breakfast; nor for a moment do they imagine that in risking their lives to save others—readily, fearlessly facing every danger—they have acted in any manner heroically. Often, too, have all these things been done in the middle of a tempestuous winter's night; straight from their beds these thrice-gallant men have gone on their dangerous errand of mercy. It is not everyone that has this 'two-o'clock-in-the-morning courage,' as Napoleon said. Some years ago during a trial abroad, respecting the loss of a ship during a terrible storm, in reply to the query, 'How did you know it was on the English coast your vessel struck?' one of the sailors replied, 'I knew it because *at once* a boat put out to us!'

One man we spoke to, who from the account he gave us of a fearful shipwreck had evidently with others risked his own life in the attempt to save the crew (which attempt, gallant though it was, was, alas! only partially successful), said, in reply to my query if the risk was not very great, 'Yes, none of us ever thought as how we should see home again, but we could not stand by idle on shore, and not have a try to save them poor chaps. We would have never been happy men again if we had. Die? well, we must all of us die some day, and I don't know as how a man can die

better. Fear'? I never felt no fear,' and here his voice faltered ever so little, but not so little that we did not observe it; 'only when I thought of the missus, and the little ones asleep at home—God bless 'em!—did my heart fail me, just for a moment, like; but there ain't much time for thinking on such occasions, I can tell yer.' England may well be proud of such sons; in the hour of her need they will not be found wanting. Brave men they, heroes all, who do noble deeds and blush to have them known. It is not always 'the brave, the noble, and the good' that press forward for publicity, or scramble for honours or world-transient renown. These Cornish fishermen are poor, unlearned, but they possess that nobility of nature that makes them great. And as I chatted with my hero (little he deemed I thought him so), Kingsley's lines kept running through my mind:

> Be good, . . . and let who will be clever.
> Do noble deeds, not dream them all day long;
> And thus make life, death, and that vast for ever
> One grand sweet song.

Back again to Helstone, where we had intended to spend the night at the pleasant old-time inn there, attractive to us just because so old-fashioned; but it was not to be, the evening was too lovely, the horses were fresh, and we were sentimentally inclined. How delightful it would be to drive on in the gloaming to Penzance! delightful, indeed, better far than being indoors on such a night. The very poetry of light, in which even prosaic surroundings seem less commonplace, and romantic scenery more romantic still. And should we not pass by famed St. Michael's Mount and Bay? And if we were belated, benighted, what of

that? The night was fine, the soft summer evening breeze was balmy and inviting; we were bound by no time-tables. What a rare blessing that! Each day I think we grew more and more grateful for the fact.

So to Penzance we went, and a glorious drive we had, enjoyable beyond words, one long to be remembered, never, indeed, to be forgotten. Oh, the peace, the deep tranquillity of that evening. It entered into our very souls. How romantic looked St. Michael's chapel-crowned height, standing all alone in solitary solemn grandeur, spiritualised by the mystic mellow light! one side gilded by the lingering rays of the setting sun, sinking to rest far away in a golden glory; the other silvered over by the pale moonbeams; all the rest an indefinable bluey-grey uncertainty. A picture and a poem in one, the scene of a dream. Such was our impression of the spot; we would not for worlds, we said, see it again in the garish light of day for fear lest our charmed remembrance might be rudely shaken. We were well content with that one precious memory.

By not visiting the Mount we missed the struggle for the first seat in what is called St. Michael's Chair; besides I know not what else, nor, as all was left unseen, do I now care. This chair—so tradition states—bestows upon the first who sits in it, whether man or wife, the 'ruling of the roast.' Possibly, indeed, there may be a vestige of truth in the legend; for we were told that the climb was a hazardous one, and required considerable nerve and self-possession to accomplish in safety; qualities these one generally finds in strong-minded people.

There is also a well somewhere in Cornwall (where I have forgotten now, not being self-interested in the

fact) possessing the same property; and whoever drinks first of this after marriage it is believed will be master or mistress, as the case may be. Of this well there is a story told that a certain newly wedded wife, with the foresight and cleverness of a woman, to 'make assurance doubly sure,' secreted a small phial of the water in her wedding dress, and immediately after the service drank it off, thus cheating her husband, who was not so worldly wise—though, as he had ordered a bottleful to await him at home, not so very far behind either. But 'a miss is as good as a mile.'

It is highly probable, however, had we gone to the Mount, we should neither of us have attempted the feat, even had it been easy of accomplishment, instead of the reverse; for we both ruled and yet neither ruled, and therefore we were supremely contented and joyous accordingly. Why should either of us wish for more, or to alter our blest condition? To rule is not happiness; to love is; and whoever loves, rules, contradictory though such assertions may seem. Do not we poor mortals often in seeking for what we have not, in the vain search for the unattainable, miss much of the reality we might have, if only we would? But I must not moralise more. And, kind reader, I wish you to enjoy your journey, even as we enjoyed it; nor deem me a bore: though seated comfortably in your armchair accompanying us—the pleasantest of all ways of travelling, does not some one somewhere say?

Strange it is that a spot so characteristic and unique as this should be repeated, though upon a grander scale, in Mont St. Michel, on the Normandy coast. Nature and art conjointly seldom so duplicate their choicest wares. The chances against such a

remarkable repetition are tremendous; the more extraordinary, therefore, this singular fact. Still it serves to prove that whatever is possible will sometimes be found to have occurred.

Marazion, however, made up in meanness and commonplace for all the romantic glories of St. Michael's Mount; even the golden lights and soft melting moonbeams resting thereon, and the silvered rippling sea in front, could not give it grace.

This Mount is supposed—and reasonably I think—by many antiquaries to have been the *Ictis* of the ancients. Others, however, still maintain—unreasonably it seems to me, though I speak as one little skilled in such arguments—that the Isle of Wight was that island, and assume, to account for this, that the sea has so encroached upon the coast as to have washed away the old road from the mainland; an instance, surely, of people making difficulties, and riding a hobby to death! Why, when the tin was in Cornwall—this without dispute—should it be brought so far for shipment when roads were not, and transport over so many miles of wild hilly country was difficult in the extreme, if not impossible? All this has to be taken for granted, when a port and island, one moreover that answers in every respect to ancient descriptions, was close at hand. Why indeed?

But this long controversy should surely be at rest now for good, except to those who will not be convinced. For in St. Mount's Bay has been dredged up a block of tin, much waterworn, answering exactly to Diodorus' description of what these blocks were like; this was *astragalus* or knucklebone in shape, the size and form allowing it to fit to the bottom of a ship, and

to be readily transported, by cords running in the grooves, on horse or mule back overland.

Penzance pleased us not; it was too big, too prosperous; we were spoilt for large towns and fashionable throngs. So early the next morning we decided we would tramp it to the Land's End, in the meantime giving our horses a well-merited rest. As we intended to spend the night there we filled a knapsack, which we always carried with us for such contingencies, and started for our ramble afoot, not by the direct road, but by following round the coast line. A glorious walk it was, wild and free, with the wide sky above and the far-extending sea below, and the great granite cliffs between. Of course as it lay on our route we 'did' the Logan Rock, one of those nuisances that have to be put up with. It would never do to return home, having passed close by, and, in answer to our Cornish friends' queries, have to acknowledge we had not seen it. But, pleasant as the spot is in itself, it has become such a gathering-place for tourists as to be to a great extent spoilt. We found it swarming with them, noisy all. Who could be romantic with Dick, Tom, and Harry shouting, and screaming, and singing snatches of music-hall songs? Not we certainly. Such a power is not given to us. We preferred Nature unspoilt, alone, wild; untrodden we would have her if we could, and as that was not possible in England here, we endeavoured to secure the next best thing, the temporary absence of man—of the tourist genus that is. The hardy fisherman and sun-browned native harmonise well with their surroundings, and these we like to see. After leaving the Logan Rock we had that day our desires gratified to perfection.

A magnificent ramble and scramble was ours that gladsome summer morning, and we roamed and loitered about till the morning became noon, and the noon lost itself in the gloaming ; the hours were all too short. Now at the foot of the mighty cliffs we wandered, strolling along the soft sandy stretches, little lonely land-locked nooks ; lonely but not desolate ; for we had the sea for company, nor wished for better ; now by the way of change on the topmost heights of the crags, looking down upon a vast extent of vexed waters, ship-dotted, with circling gulls wheeling restlessly about us as our sole companions.

How delightfully free we felt—a sort of schoolboy-out-for-a-holiday sensation was ours, climbing, walking, sketching, sauntering, and anon lying down on the soft thymy-scented sward, gazing into the deep infinity of blue above ! Alone thus with Nature, how you grow to love her ! how fair she seems, a faithful lover she, ever kind and gentle, soothing in your sorrow, rejoicing in your joy ! As you look upon her, so she looks back to you.

Supremely fine though the day had been, towards eventide great rounded rain-charged clouds gathered in the west, and as the glowing sun sank slowly down amongst these wild warring winds arose.

It was well ; thus we would see the last outstretching land of Britain, that rugged granite wave-washed fortress of hers, protecting her against the fierce onslaughts of the treacherous stormy ocean in all its wrathful impressiveness. Better so than in a tamer mood. Though, therefore, the outlook argued ill for the morrow, and promised us a wet return tramp, we were even pleased. As we neared our destination the

winds increased; more furious still they blew as we journeyed on, as though they resented our coming to this fastness of theirs. Bleak and barren became our way; high up on the elevated moorland there was no shelter from the sweeping blasts; we had literally to fight for our footsteps against the very teeth of the storm. Bits of granite dust were blown right into our eyes, causing them to smart again; the last portion of our stage was a struggle altogether. Only those who have experienced it can know how fiercely and powerfully the untempered storm-winds at times rage over this unprotected headland. Direct from off the vast Atlantic they come. This projecting bulwark buttress, therefore, has to contend with their full fury.

And so we came to the little desolate-looking inn that stands solitary right on the top of the veritable Land's End. Here we found a ready welcome, and had the good fortune to have the place to ourselves—the tourists had all departed. That, indeed, was something to be thankful for; we should be free to wander whither we would, undisturbed, unobserved, and so could give our fancies full rein.

Some people, we were told, are disappointed with the Land's End—we were not. The rocks, though grand, are not so fine nor so impressive as those at the Lizard; that fact must be admitted; but then this *is* the land's end: therein lies the glamour of the spot. Sentiment, even in this unsentimental age, has a great deal to do with our appreciation of scenery.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Land's End—A glorious Sea-scape—A stormy Night—In Devon again—Newton Abbot—An Old-World Village—A peaceful Spot—The Charms of a Rural Hostelrie—Hard to Please—A terrible Curse—Devonshire Roads—Scenery free to all—A primitive Town—Belated—The Influence of Scenery—Chagford—Country Quarters—Farm-house Apartments—Chance Wanderings—A Chapter of Accidents—Rough Driving—In Search of an Inn—A remote Part of the World.

HERE we were at last, at the Land's End, the *ultima Thule* of our journey, at the very end of the world as it were; three thousand miles of stormy ocean before us, bounded only by far-off America, once an unknown country; no other land till that!

Above us was a desolate, brooding, storm-tossed sky, a grey leaden mass of wind-swept vapour, and through torn rents in this here and there stray gleams of lurid sunlight came and went; beneath us a vast whirling eddying waste, a chaos of tumultuous foam-flecked waters, furrowed with raging waves all in angry turmoil. It was a sight to behold; the resistless onward rush of those furious waves, one following the other unceasingly, fiercely racing to the land, struggling and writhing, tossing and heaving, whirling and coiling, and foaming with uncontrollable fury.

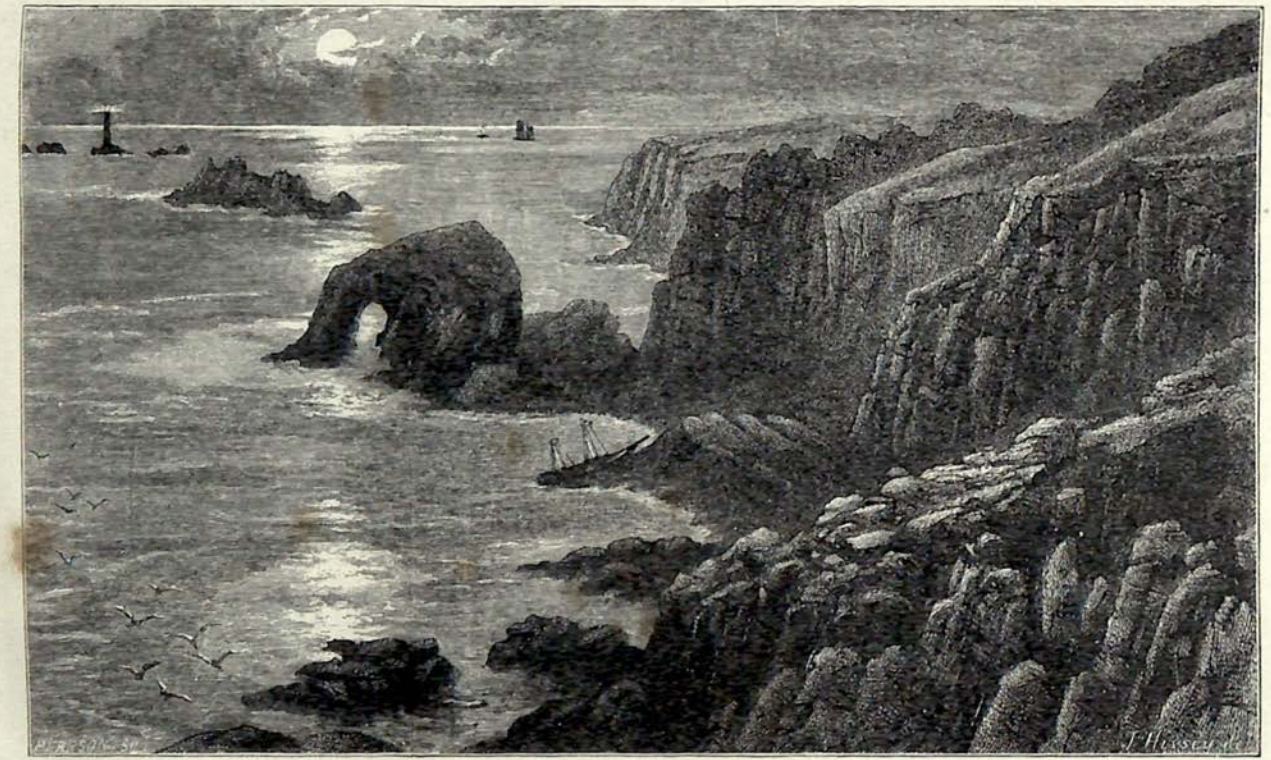
How grandly did those great white-crested waves—curling green majestic Atlantic rollers—break in solemn thunder-tones against the steadfast rocks, dashing themselves into shattered fragments of spray,

ragged and torn, dissipating themselves into flying mist, flung high into the moisture-laden air, accompanying each shock with a sullen boom and a far-resounding roar, strewing the shore and ever-wet rocks with mazy masses of yeast-like foam! Then after each came an indescribable long-drawn hiss, as the broken waters rushed angrily back, only to gather fresh strength to renew the maddening strife. There was something exceedingly spiteful in that hiss; it was the very cry of a baffled, impotent rage. What a feeling of unlimited power did not that mighty conflict of the wrathful waters give to us!

The dense spray-laden air, the uneasy restless tossing of the vexed seas, the leaden, louring sky above, lurid around the setting sun, the uncanny shrieking of the hurrying winds, the weird cries of the storm-tossed gulls—all added to the dreariness and effect of the scene. Had our journey been one of toil instead of pleasure, it would have been worth the taking were it only to have seen that one grand sight.

Cautiously climbing down, we stood upon the very outermost point of land; we had to hold on to the rocks, to stand at all against the fierce onslaughts of the rushing winds. Here we looked out upon boundless space into the illimitable. From whence came those mighty winds, with such overpowering velocity, sweeping over that trackless waste, which, vast as it was, could not contain them? Whither were they going?

Then, as these fierce blasts went by us, whistling spitefully; as the wing-weary sea-gulls came close alongside, one after another, blown inshore helplessly; as the fiery sun sank in darkening gloom, with a lurid



THE LAND'S END

glow, sending forth shafts of red from behind the dun storm-charged clouds; it was reassuring to watch the distant star-like gleam of the lighthouse, shining so tranquilly—the one calm steadfast thing amidst all that bewildering confusion. A wild tempest-tossed sky, bending wrathfully over an angry wilderness of raging waters; two of the immensities of earth in a state of stupendous strife—a revelation of gigantic power! As we saw it then the ocean appeared more dreadful than lovable; more the inveterate enemy than the friend of man. We may love the sea, think of it as a gentle thing, as we watch it on a fine summer day, toying with the pebbles on the beach or lapping lazily upon some sandy shore; but it is not always so. Many there are who curse its cruel treacherousness; many who have lost upon it wife, or mother, or sister, or brother. Ask them about the beauty of the sea. Standing on the firm rocks, safe from its anger, free from all harm, we could calmly look down upon it, and glory in its wrathful majesty.

A little ship—a coasting sloop it seemed to us—far out from land—wisely so—was tossing madly about, its hull now buried in the foaming waters, its wet shiny sides as it rose gleaming a ruddy gold where they caught the burning light of the setting sun; farther out still was another vessel, possibly a large liner, but appearing to us only a small speck, so space-diminished was she. The apparent small size of these revealed to us the relative greatness of all things else.

But as we watched, the darkness grew apace, the light all faded from earth, and sea, and sky, and we found ourselves only looking out upon a cold grey vacuity, a dreary desolation of nothingness, densely

dark; but the darker it grew, the fiercer the tempest raged, the brighter shone forth the lighthouse's steady beam. Then we reclimbed the cliffs, this with some difficulty, as the darkness was very real, and found our way back to our little inn. Tired with our day's doings, we retired early to rest—at least we tried to sleep, but not much we got. All throughout the live-long night the wind roared and the storm raged, unabated in its fury. Our windows rattled in their casements, causing clanging sleep-disturbing noises, not continuous, but coming with sudden sharp reports, effectually making lengthened slumber impossible. The tempest-driven rain beat against the shaking panes incessantly, but above all we heard the deep thunder-boom of the breaking billows, in their endless onslaughts upon the iron-bound coast. What with the moaning and shrieking of the winds, the roaring of the restless waves, the everlastingly repeated rattle, rattle, rattle of the shaken windows, sleep was almost an impossibility, even to travellers wearied by long tramping like ourselves. When for a time I did drop off, it was only to dream, disturbedly, that I was in the midst of a great battle, with musketry rattling all around me, and cannons roaring everywhere; and suddenly I awoke with a start, as an extra fierce blast struck the house, and imagined a shell had burst close beside me. Uneasy slumbering that!

But the longest night comes to an end in time, and towards morning, when the storm began to lull—we must have dozed off, for we awoke to find the sun shining cheerily in our room—the gale had blown itself out, the storm-washed sky was of a deep pure blue—a blue seen only after rain—across which, torn and rent,

grey clouds of fantastic form were sailing along tranquilly, not in the eager rush of overnight, when the sun went down amongst them in lurid splendour, and when all things were bathed in burning crimson and glowing gold.

The wind had dropped, weary and worn with the long strife; but the sea raged on, roaring and rolling towards the land in majestic masses of surging billows, hills and valleys of rushing waters of a deep bottle-green, grand beyond words to give. Impossible to realise by either pen or pencil, or both combined, was that impressive vision of tumbling, heaving, struggling, ever-changing, chaotic, churning wave-furrowed waters —form lost in motion—a disturbed, restless, and uneasy sea. The lighthouse, dark against the light sky now, was even more marked by a thin white line of uprising spray than by its own weather-beaten self.

We were told—we did not go to see for ourselves, for the grand sea-scape kept us in willing bondage—that a little hostel some short distance farther inland possesses an old sign-board bearing on one side the legend, 'The first inn in England,' and on the other, 'The last inn in England,' not quite true now, however. Also that there is a milestone a mile away, with a somewhat similar inscription as to distances, as though Great Britain all began and ended here.

Leaving the Land's End we felt our return journey had in truth commenced; one-half of our delightful outing was over; and though we had many miles of pleasant country still to traverse, many happy days of wandering yet in store, we felt just a trifle sorrowful to know that so much of our holiday had been spent.

We returned to Penzance on foot as we had left it,

and, joining the phaeton there, proceeded once more upon our 'cruise on wheels.' The horses, fresh from their rest, trotted right merrily along, and soon the open country was reached.

How ready one is to say, 'I will do this or that,' but the performance is not always so easy of accomplishment. Have I not more than once, warned by the limits of space, declared I must hurry through Cornwall? and have I not in spite of my expressed intentions deliberately lingered there? Now, therefore, to take the bull by the horns, and to avoid the possibility of being tempted any further to loiter by the way, and also to avoid any needless repetition of description of similar kinds of scenery to that already traversed, please to find us right out of Cornwall, and again in the fair green land of Devonshire—very green and luxuriant it looked to us after the wilder beauties of the neighbouring county—back even as far as sunny Torquay, whither we went to meet a friend. This pleasurable duty done, once more we continued on our way.

Glancing at our maps the night before we started, we concluded we would strike northward, and have a look at some of the grand coast scenery of that portion of Devon, with its quaint old villages and picturesque combes, and get a glimpse as well of stag-haunted Exmoor. Truly our programme had plenty of variety.

We had a delightful morning on which to proceed with our journey, a morning of soft sunshine and gentle breezes. A bright blue sky was overhead, with great rolling white clouds upon it, sailing majestically along; the landscape ever flecked with moving shadows and golden gleams of light alternately. These varying

lights and shadows add wonderfully to the effect of a scene; they give the charm of endless variety; they are to it what a smile is to the human face.

An enjoyable drive brought us to Newton Abbot, a very bright clean-looking town, through which we drove without halting; and soon again found ourselves in the quiet, leafy, country lanes, the scenery improving with each mile of our way, till passing a stretch of bleak moorland, just coming in time to impress upon us the rich sylvan beauty of the rest of the way, and then by some clay or pottery works, unbeautiful, we arrived at the charming old-world village of Bovey Tracey.

Before driving up to the little country inn here we descended to inspect the beautifully situated and well-kept churchyard, in which was a most chaste monument to three sisters, if I remember aright. A quiet, solemn, peaceful resting-place, almost a spot to 'make you feel in love with death.'

Then on to the comfortable country inn, where we found a charming motherly hostess—an ideal landlady, and needless, therefore, to say excellent fare. A cool, still, flower-bedecked sitting-room we had: our repast —cold lamb, freshly gathered salad, clear, nut-brown, sparkling ale, home-brewed. What better fare could the hungry traveller desire?'

Exactly. What is it that is so charming about these rural old-fashioned inns, I wonder, so rest-suggesting and ease-giving? Not altogether past associations—there must be something beyond that. I take it a great part of it is the utter absence of all pretence—no glare or glitter or gingerbread gilt work anywhere about. All things look honest; comfort is always before show; show, indeed, is never dreamt of. Your welcome

is hearty; the best the place can do is done for you; and as a rule very good is the best. The fare is plentiful, wholesome, and generally well cooked; often the landlady is cook as well as hostess; nor is she above seeing personally to the wants of her guests. Moreover in such unpretending hostels such abominable contrivances to spoil good meat as closed ranges and roasting ovens, are of course happily non-existent.

Then the peace-bestowing quietude of such places is most delightful; you have no stony-eyed waiter in seedy black ever hovering about, and should you feel at all dull both host and hostess would be but too pleased to indulge in a chat with you; you are therefore less alone than when merged amongst the unsympathetic throngs of a large hotel. Oh, the comfort, the ease, the undisturbed quiet of these old-time rural hostelries. The railway has given us in place of them 'the hotel,' vast and soulless, unpicturesque, and with no individuality, the perfection of restlessness, an unhappy conglomeration of numbered rooms, waiters, and indigestion-giving *tables d'hôte*. A poor exchange, in truth!

A modest well-ordered country inn has a special charm for me. As a rule, such places have a very real but not readily describable look of genuine unostentatious comfort and of simple hospitality that is very pleasing in these days of cheerless show. The living, as I have previously remarked, though good, is simple, and in keeping with the place; but, after all, a well-cooked joint with really fresh vegetables, crisp salads, cucumbers, sweets of some kind, and cheese to finish up with, accompanied by a frothing tankard of cool clear ale, is no bad repast, and with a healthy

appetite, begotten of outdoor life, more to be appreciated than the most luxurious dinner in town. Wines, especially when the ale is so good, at such rural hostels you would hardly look for or require; though, where they have a cellar, the wines on an average are not inferior to those supplied by far more pretentious hotels and railway restaurants, whilst they are considerably lower in price.

I do love these old-world hostels, unpretending, picturesque, comfortable, and homelike; one can understand whilst 'taking one's ease' in such how it was Shenstone came to write his famous lines, too well known to need quotation here, anent inns; and how Dr. Johnson came to make his familiar remarks respecting them.

The landlady at Bovey Tracey was one of the kind-hearted homely type above mentioned—a comely, good-natured body. In the course of our conversation with her she remarked, we ought to stay a day or two in the place, if time did not press us, to explore some of the surrounding beauties: there were foaming falls, fairies' caverns, deer-dwelling woods, and I know not what else to see, besides hills to climb; and if on fishing bent the rivers and streams about were troutful—this last was thrown in as an additional inducement, but we needed it not. Truly the temptations to stay were great, but if we allowed ourselves to be tempted thus at every cosy little hostelrie we came across, whenever would our journey be completed? Not possibly till the shortening days of chill October were at hand, or later even; so in spite of all the many attractions, but with some qualms of regret, we decided, as the weather was so fine, to take full advantage of it and make another stage that day.

The weather had been very fine of late, and the only one we came across to grumble at the blessing of clear skies and warm sunshine was a fisherman standing listlessly at our hotel door, to whom we spoke as we left. For his part 'he would like some rain,' he remarked: 'who minds a little wet?' It would appear the streams about were low and clear, and, though the fish rose occasionally, their studies appeared to be about all things else but artificial flies. What a difficult matter it would be, we thought, to make a climate to suit everybody!

But if the angler only happens to be a painter as well as a sportsman, even if in ever so small a way, how his pleasures are doubled. Fine sunny days, when the fish are slothful, are the very time for sketching; and when the weather is too bad to pursue this occupation, then, as a rule, the fishing is good. It is well sometimes to have 'two strings to your bow.'

I know not whether Bovey Tracey takes its name from the proud and knightly old Devonshire family of De Tracey, but should think it probable they had in former times something to do with the spot. It may be remembered that one Sir William de Tracey was amongst the party who, in the year 1174, proceeded to Canterbury, and in the interest of Henry II. murdered Thomas à Becket, scattering his brains on the floor of his own cathedral; for which sacrilegious crime a terrible curse is said to have fallen upon his descendants, to the effect that—

> Ever shall the Traceys
> Have the wind in their faces.

Tradition asserts that Sir William, to do penance, and in expiation for his crime, attempted on several

occasions to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but was always driven back by furious adverse winds (there being no steam in those days); and ever afterwards his unlucky descendants in all their enterprises were met by opposing winds: hence the lines quoted.

All Devonshire roads are beautiful; I doubt if it would be possible to find anywhere in the fair county a mile of uninteresting road. Our way that day led us through a country literally overflowing with tranquil loveliness, lovely yet lonely, gay with many-tinted woods, and musical with many murmuring streams; the fragrance-laden air was filled with the gladsome song of birds and droning and humming of wandering bees. Rabbits were gambolling about on the stray stretches of turf by the wayside, and squirrels were playing pranks in the branches of the trees overhead: these took but little notice of us, so tame they seemed: and they were all the company we had, nor wished we for more. All Nature was in a joyous merry mood, and we rejoiced with her. It must have been a sad heart which would not have been glad on such a day.

There is one thing: whoever owns the land, the scenery is the special property of no one; like the sea, the glorious skies, and fresh free air, it may be enjoyed equally by the poorest wayfarer and the wealthy traveller. I love our old English roads, abounding in past associations of the fondly cherished coaching days. The rural lanes are even more beautiful, though not possessing the same store of bygone memories, and a country footpath is perhaps the perfection of a way. But you cannot travel for long or far solely on footpaths, charming as they are; they exist more for local convenience than for regular traffic.

Moreton Hampstead was reached in the dusk: surely this is one of the most primitive towns in Great Britain. Nearly all the houses appeared to us to be thatched; altogether the place has a look of antiquity and primæval simplicity, rare in this advanced age, and eye-gratifying accordingly.

Leaving this slumbrous place, the darkness grew apace, and as there was no moon, the country thinly inhabited, our way doubtful, we proceeded slowly and cautiously, as it would be no joke at the end of a long stage, with tired horses, to get lost and benighted in the bewildering mazes of a Devonshire lane; lanes which are a perpetual perplexing puzzle to me—a problem in Euclid is child's-play to them.

The sun had set pale and wan in the west. The long low hills, trees, and infrequent cottages told out dark, almost black at times, against the still luminous sky; the day of calm and peaceful tranquillity was over; a chilly rushing night-wind had arisen, swaying the trees and rustling their leaves in a fitful manner. A mystery of uncertainty was over all the landscape; it was only half revealed; all things were obscured in the fast-waning light, hidden in gloomy shade. Great was the contrast with the cheerful world of bright sunshine we had so recently traversed! Storm-blown trees were on the lonely heights above us, through which the wild winds hurried with a mournful wail, like the cry of some lost spirit all forlorn, or of a wanderer in distress, seeking something never to be found. Strange shapes those wind-blown trees assumed, weird forms they showed against the grey-growing sky, their sombre masses of straggling foliage ever changing as the winds tossed their darksome branches overhead, like the out-

stretched arms of hovering ghosts, not of the traditional white species, however. It was a wild bit of road, uncanny-appearing, as my wife said, as she came quite close to my side, and bade me drive on quickly: 'It looks so eerie, like a bit of another unknown world.' 'A capital idea,' I replied; 'try and imagine yourself in Mars taking a driving tour through that planet!' but madame told me to 'drive on, and not be silly.'

The road presently became more open, and with the change the feeling of depression wore away. Strange that a scene should have such an influence on our spirits, but so it was. A gloomy landscape has a depressing power over certain persons, a hold upon their imaginations, a sensation very real, but one not to be defined nor yet analysed. Poets have made good use of this feeling, and have drawn endless analogies therefrom. Such outward impressions depend more, of course, upon the temperament of the man than mere physical condition; but more or less, I verily believe, we are all unconsciously or otherwise influenced by the class of scenery that surrounds us. Cowper loved green fields, hedgerows, a gentle humanised landscape; mountains made him feel melancholy; and many others have confessed to the same sensation in the presence of the sublime, without being at all able to explain the reason. I have met strong robust men quite miserable amongst the grandest scenery.

It must be remembered that the love for wild scenes and barren mountains is but of recent growth. Possibly Scott, casting as he did a glamour of romance over his beloved highlands, has done as much as anyone to raise this love within us; but even his affection

for the grand was directly influenced by his delight in human legends and old traditions; it was but a background to these. Wordsworth alone seems to have loved Nature for herself. Even in the poet Gray's time the Alps were looked upon more with dread than love. 'Those horrid Alps,' he says. Dr. Johnson used the epithet 'dreadful' to the Scottish mountains, and in old works generally no loving mention of them is made. Neither painters nor poets of old gave us the gloom or grandeur of such scenes, simply because they saw no beauty in them. They would have utterly failed to understand Byron's raptures when he cries—

> Oh, for the crags that are wild and majestic,
> The steep frowning glories of dark Loch-na-Gar!

And truly there is a vast difference between a peace-bestowing pastoral scene, bathed in a soft golden sunshine, warm-tinted and reposeful, with perchance comfortable-looking farmsteads peeping out of leafy greenery here and there, and gently sloping fields about, all things being suggestive of human occupancy and mastery, nature domesticated; and, say, a bleak, barren, wind-swept moorland, inclosed by barrier mountains, sullen in form and forbidding of hue, with possibly a darksome threatening storm-cloud brooding over all. Here the sublimity of solitude may be felt, but even this is not the mountains, with their lonely beetling heights and cruel precipices. Nature has grander, gloomier sights far than this. A glory, too, as well as gloom, dependent on atmospheric conditions, giving an effect which may or may not be in harmony with one of the many moods of the observer's mind.

Daylight revealed Chagford to be a very much out-of-the-world village, a gathering of plain, substantial

structures, pleasantly grouped on the hill side, plain yet picturesque as a whole, in spite of their plainness. After all, architecture is a matter of construction, and a plain, simple, unaffected building, suitable for its purpose, is better far than some desirable residences I wot of, covered with meaningless gingerbread decorations, or the gim-crack stuck-on ornaments with which the speculative builder so delights to adorn his sham Gothic or so-called Queen Anne villas. We all hate the speculative builder; I am fain to confess I love neither him nor his works; but, to be just, I wonder really whether all his bad building is not more due to the demand for a showy-looking house by the public, at a price less than that for which it can be honestly constructed, than to the love of inferior work. The public have made a demand, and they get houses accordingly.

Chagford is surrounded by beautiful scenery, pleasantly diversified, wild and sylvan, bleak moor and fern-clad glen, shady woods and open uplands, the rural and romantic, a happy and somewhat rare combination of the pastoral and the grand. It struck us as a capital centre for excursions. It borders, too, upon Dartmoor, and would make excellent head-quarters for exploring the less known portions of that rare bit of wild Devon.

As a pleasant variation from the everlasting sea-side outing, *paterfamilias* might do well, it appears to me, to bring his household down to some such retired spot as this—and there are plenty such to be found in England—where apartments are to be had on most moderate terms, or reasonable board may be obtained at the quiet inn. An agreeable change to all it would

be, a novel experience, exploring on foot a new country —a little unknown world to the youngsters—with everything fresh, and the possibilities of scenic surprise and unexpected discoveries; besides the endless rambles afoot, when fishing, sketching, climbing, blackberrying (rare fun blackberrying), picnicking, botanising, and a hundred other '-ings' might be indulged in.

It has often surprised me that people should rush year after year to the same fashionable seaside resorts, where everyone dresses as they do in town, and a monotony of sameness is the most conspicuous feature; this is not change, it is merely carrying London down to the sea. Moreover at the coast the country rambles are generally very limited, and uninteresting and worthless at that. I wonder at this state of affairs —or rather, perhaps, I should, had I not ceased to wonder at things in this world—when there are so many pleasant country inns in picturesque neighbourhoods where *paterfamilias* could have excellent accommodation at half the cost of the thronged watering place.

We have more than once tried by way of experiment a short sojourn at a country inn. Of course we selected one that pleased us, and of which the host and hostess seemed agreeable; one with pleasant surroundings as well: there are fortunately many such. So particular, indeed, were we in our choice, fastidious mortals that we are, that, not content with fine scenery alone, we made a garden to potter about in at any hour a *sine quâ non*: this is certainly a great additional attraction in such a place. Our experiences of such rural inns gratified us much; on each occasion we enjoyed our stay exceedingly. There are still, the

Fates be praised! hundreds of such hostels scattered all over the country; they have to be hunted up of course, but the search is a pleasant amusement and a mild excitement as well; and when you do chance to come across, as we have often done, some dear old-fashioned inn, with high-pitched gables, quaint clustering chimneys, and ample porch, so suggestive of a welcome, your reward will be great, presupposing the landlord and internal accommodation equal the external promises: this is almost a certainty, for we have found, in hotels, outside appearances to be seldom deceptive. The rooms you will possibly find low-ceilinged—the cosier and the better for that—the linen white (positively white, ye London laundresses), and moreover fragrant with lavender; and having satisfied yourself in all respects, if you are not comfortable in your quarters, I pity you. This picture I have drawn is no ideal one; fearing lest it might be so imagined, I beg to state I have intentionally said less in praise than I deem I ought, bearing in mind many a delightful restful rural inn we have stayed at, and all the many little acts of kindness and thoughtful attentions we have received.

But even better is a farmhouse, with pleasant harvest fields to roam over, or haymaking to help with —what a perfect playground for children is a hayfield! —and all the manifold farming occupations to watch: the milking of the cows, the outgoing and incoming of the teams, the feeding of the live stock, the daily gathering of the eggs, the dairy and butter making, and all the hundred and one pursuits of English farm life. Thus you need never find time hang heavily on your hands, and will learn much, besides having the no small treat of feasting upon newly laid eggs, fresh

country eggs, not those doing duty for such in London; genuine milk (how delicious this!), and barn-door-fed fowls, not the tasteless fatted-up articles they sell in towns; a barn-door fowl, hunting about for its varied food, is equal to—better, I think, than—any game; and last, but not least, fresh vegetables always. Life at a farmhouse abounds in interest; there is ever something going on—something to occupy your thoughts with and lead you into the open air.

We left Chagford early one glorious morning, a morning of bright sunshine and pleasant breezes, giving every promise of an almost perfect day, for the barometer was high and rising. A consultation of our maps and road-books left us very much in doubt as to our best route, and we found ourselves starting with positively no ideas at all on the subject. This much we knew: the scenery in all directions was simply enchanting; the weather, as I have said, was perfection, so that we could indulge in a camp-out if necessary—and we almost hoped it would be necessary. So for once we decided that we would put our maps safely away in the boot out of sight, and have nothing to do with them for that day at any rate. We determined we would simply take our chances of the way, selecting whatever roads best pleased us or looked the most tempting, heeding not whither they led; the only proviso we made with ourselves was that we would steer a general course northward, taking our calculations from the sun. How joyous and light-hearted we felt, how charmingly free—there was an indescribable delight in the very uncertainties that were before us. We positively had not the remotest ghost of an idea as to where our night's quarters

would be; all that we learnt from the hasty glance we took at our maps was that we should pass through a thinly inhabited country, and that there were no towns on our way—all the better for that, we remarked—only a few rural villages. We should have to spend the night somewhere—that was certain—at some wayside inn perchance; and we trusted to our usual good fortune that something would turn up. There were, too, the possibilities of adventures occurring, though in ever so mild a form. So we started upon our day's wandering in a most enviably happy state of mind.

What a drive we had that day to be sure! but I am anticipating. Our road began excellently well; it rose and fell, affording us ever and anon glorious far-stretching prospects over hill and dale, with every here and there an old much-weather-beaten stone-built mill or lonely farmhouse. Little of life we saw—we had the woods and way all to ourselves.

I know no other portion of England just like this; the scenery is unique. Now we were traversing breezy heights, with a well-wooded undulating world around and beneath us, enlivened by sparkling streams and bounded by purple-tinted moorlands; again we were in a leafy glen, tree-shaded, cool, and pleasant; and so we drove along, always when a branch road came taking the one that looked the most inviting and held out the best promise of good things ahead. After all, this is the way to drive, we said, if the weather is favourable and time permits. What a nuisance it is to see an attractive road, which you feel sure will lead you into the midst of scenic loveliness, and to find by your maps it is the wrong one!

Happily our charts were safe out of harm's way; so we chose the pleasant paths.

But it was not all smooth sailing, or rather driving, not by a very long way, as it turned out. These Devonshire lanes are very beautiful, but sometimes deceiving: the hitherto fairly good surface of our road began sadly to deteriorate, and not only that, but by degrees it grew narrower and narrower, till we almost wondered whether it would close upon us altogether. Then it became stony, dreadfully stony, with a rare assortment of all kinds and shapes, varying in size from a moderate boulder to that of a walnut, none smaller I think. The beauty of the scenery was now wholly lost upon me, as all my attention and eyesight had to be given to the horse's feet, to avoid, if possible, a stumble or a fall.

I shall not forget that road in a hurry—never, indeed! More than once we had actually to stop in order to remove huge stones out of our way. Trotting was of course out of the question; slow walking was our best pace. Indeed, for curiosity we timed ourselves, and found we really managed to accomplish two whole miles in the course of an hour! At one spot, in trying unsuccessfully to avoid a delightful specimen of a boulder, I put the near-side lamp right in the hedge, and of course exactly at the very place where there was an awkward stump of a tree. Result —lamp smashed, temper raised, hard words about Devonshire lanes, and the foolishness of not knowing where we were going to, and so forth. But at last our troubles came to an end. At the next crossways, I must confess, we selected the best road and let the scenery take care of itself; and presently

we found ourselves in North Tawton, a plain but prosperous-looking village, which agreeably surprised us by possessing a very good inn, at which we fared well, though we had to wait a couple of hours to get some chops; but then we did get them at last.

Wandering about the inn yard, to see what information I could gather from the ostler, I chanced to alight upon an individual who proclaimed himself to be an artist, staying at the hotel, and asked me if I would like to see some of his work 'just to while away a quarter of an hour.' Of course I would—the ostler was no good—what a fortunate meeting! The artist led the way up some hitherto unperceived backstairs—the geography of these old inns is delightfully puzzling—and to my astonishment I found myself in quite a large room, a hall in fact; the why and wherefore of its existence I could not make out. All I could learn was, that it was built when the hotel was, ever so many years ago—for what? Query as to its purpose unanswered, and the riddle I could not, unaided, solve. Now and then I have come across similar fine old rooms, at the most unlikely rural inns, remote from habitations: these in such places are now seldom or ever used, save to store away old crippled furniture that has seen better days, old worn-out harness, dilapidated sign-boards, and the accumulated rubbish of ages, which country people appear so to cherish.

But to return to myself. My artist friend, having led me up, suddenly came to a standstill, and proudly requested me to look around and behold his work—on the walls. It would seem he had been amusing himself by painting these with panel decorations representing certain well-known views of Devonshire scenery.

Somewhat rough these works of art were, crude as well I thought, but as my guide had evidently a high opinion of them I wisely held my tongue. They were certainly boldly painted and as glaring as pure chromes, undiluted blues, and fiery reds could make them. The artist was a regular character, and I could not make him out at all. Here he was, enjoying himself painting somebody else's walls, a very pretty and profitable amusement surely; fortunately they were not my walls! A self-taught artist I presumed, native talent running to waste.

After a due inspection of these works of art, I descended and ordered the horses to be put to; for, as we did not know exactly whither we were going, or what would be the final upshot of our chartless cruise, we felt it advisable to have as much daylight as possible before us.

Our road was a good one at starting, but so was our former one, and, as we did not know what might be coming, we made 'hay whilst the sun shone.' It was pleasant to find ourselves trotting along once more after our enforced walking; but, alas! our excellent bit of way was too good to last; it soon became both hilly and rough, and we feared a repetition of our morning's experiences, though so far it might be called smooth travelling compared to what we had endured.

The scenery we passed through was simply glorious, wild, lonely; woody in the valleys, bare and bleak on the uplands, for we were for ever either ascending or descending hills—trying work for our horses and trying work for ourselves, as the day was growing old, and we could not make much pace—a capital country for a pedestrian, but not exactly the sort for a driving

tour. Indeed, so steep and rough was one hill that we were compelled to alight, our man as well as ourselves, and even then the horses had enough to do to drag the empty carriage along.

However, we quite forgave the badness of the way in consideration of the splendid scenery through which it led us. This part of the country gave to us a strange feeling of remoteness; the landscape had a wild physiognomy, open and free, somewhat as England might have looked a thousand years ago. It possessed the charm of freshness, for it is unlike any other portion of Great Britain—that is, as far as our knowledge extends.

The uplands we passed over were all uninhabited, not even a stray sheep did we see, much less a building of any kind, unless indeed an old tumble-down wall could be called such. On these heights the intense stillness was remarkable, almost in truth oppressive; on them one feels what silence really is, the impressiveness, the sense of utter loneliness, caused by the simple absence of all sound. In the valleys we came across primitive lonesome villages, primitive and picturesque, the few inhabitants of which came out and stared at the phaeton with as ort of wondering gaze. Doubtless few or no conveyances, save rough carts and perchance waggons—these doubtful—ever penetrated this out-of-the-world region; so their wonderment was perfectly natural.

CHAPTER XV.

Picturesque Villages—A wild Country—A gruesome Spot—Inn Names—'All's well that ends well'—An Angler's Head-quarters—A Fisherman's Holiday—A peaceful Valley—A Picture Dealer's Advice—Old Hostelries—The peculiar Advantages of Devonshire Towns—Barnstaple—Barum Ware—Bideford—A wonderful Bridge—The 'Hobby Drive'—Clovelly—A curious Street—*Bric-à-brac* Hunting—Old Books—Local Papers.

THERE are still to be found scattered here and there over the land dear old picturesque villages, more like a poet's or a painter's conception than a living reality of this nineteenth century—drowsy, sleepy villages, looking like bits out of pictures as you pass them by, hamlets that have never known the hand of the modern builder. Such spots offer startling contrasts to the feverish unrest of our times; they appear as though a spell was cast over them, so that nothing could ever disturb their old-world tranquillity; they seem to have no part or parcel in the hurry and turmoil of our times. Truly to have to stay for any length of time in such places would be a most unenviable fate, but to pass through such ancient haunts of profound peace is a very pleasing experience. Even the very children partake more or less of the drowsy, silent character of their surroundings. Of this kind were the tiny hamlets we came across that day.

As we journeyed on and on, coming to no human habitations, save the few stray hamlets already

described (which could not even boast of a poor 'public,' a rare exception to the almost universal rule), we began to feel just a trifle anxious about procuring accommodation for the night; so once or twice when we did see anyone to ask, we inquired of them if there was any inn on our way, but nobody seemed to be able to give us the much desired information. Pleasant this! Moreover, though the day had been so delightfully fine, as it began to wane clouds gathered overhead, harmless ones probably, still they suggested the possibility of rain; and to be caught in the wet as we were, with tired steeds on an unknown road, and with no idea as to whereabouts our stage would end, or what our road would prove like farther on, was not a fate exactly to be desired. Let it not be imagined, however, that we did not thoroughly enjoy our wild drive, with all its uncertainties and doubtful prospects, for we did; we were laughing and as merry as could be the whole of that adventurous day. If the rain came, well and good, but still we did not desire it.

Never shall I forget the magnificent prospect we had from one point of our road (we were high up), looking down and around upon all things; and though time pressed us we spent quite ten minutes in gazing on it. The landscape (hillscape rather, I would say) in front of us was a far-spreading one: heights beyond heights, bleak and bare, purple-hued in the tender gloaming, fading away into cool greys in the valleys below, and of a warm ruddy gold along their waving summits, were softly kissed by the sunset's lingering rays. All the highest portions of the scene were bathed in a soft splendour of golden purple light. Rosy tints were upon the wooded slopes near at hand,

gradually losing themselves in a dark blue mystery. Overhead grey clouds were travelling, lined with gold, rain-fringed farther away; in front of us a yellow sheen was on the horizon, making the distance by contrast appear a powerful indigo. The low-lying sun lit up strongly the higher portions of the broken country, leaving all the rest half revealed and half in gloomy shade. We felt the golden glory resting on ourselves, the horses, and the phaeton, as we drove along our exposed road. It was a scene of glowing beauty, all things above flushed with a rosy hue, all below lying dreamily in the soft cold twilight; a scene full of solemn splendour, with broad effects and abounding in harmonious appositions. Why do artists so seldom give us these? I take it, the reason is the public prefer pretty things, and as of course artists must live, whatever their own feelings may be, they are first of all bound to please their patrons.

For once in a way our road became tolerably level, still uneven very; but we were not encountering any hills, and so made fair progress. Just as we were wondering to ourselves if ever we should descend again, our way (Devonshire roads are always doing something unexpected) took a sudden bend, and then began to descend with a vengeance: this descent had to be carefully negotiated. Down and down we went —it was fortunate with our tired horses we had not to drag up that hill—down still and down, till we came to a dark wooded valley at the bottom, with a stilly pool of rush-grown water, gleaming drearily in the deepening dusk through the darksome tossing branches of the surrounding trees. This pool looked weird and uncanny in the failing light; over it some strange

solitary bird was wheeling round and round, uttering plaintive peevish cries, and to add to its eerieness the night winds ever and again swept through the woods with a mournful wail. The spot was suggestive of evil deeds, of some unrecorded crime, just the very place for a sensational novelist to plot a murder in, the very locality a highwayman of old would have chosen in which to do away with his victim. A lonesome gruesome pool, dark, dismal, and silent, haunted by hovering shadows, a melancholy unhallowed place that spoke as plainly of some unremembered crime as an old manor house does of ghosts. Both may be innocent of such things, but both suggest their appropriateness. It is strange what a number of odd nooks and corners you pass on a day's drive that call forth peculiar impressions and raise singular imaginings within you; possibly many of these may arise from some half-forgotten associations linking in some curious manner the past with the present.

It was late, and yet, so far, we had seen no signs of any inn. 'Is it not about time,' my wife asked me, 'that the proverbial something should turn up?' I could only reply 'Quite,' and drive on moodily, for the horses were weary as well as ourselves, with the long and hard day's work, and it is not pleasant to urge along tired cattle. But Fortune, though she had treated us rather unkindly that day, seldom wholly deserted us, nor did she now in our hour of need; a bend in the road, and a little rustic hostel met our longing gaze, and, great joy, stabling was attached to it! But a second glance rather damped our ardour, though just then we were by no means difficult to please. The place looked primitive, little more than a roadside

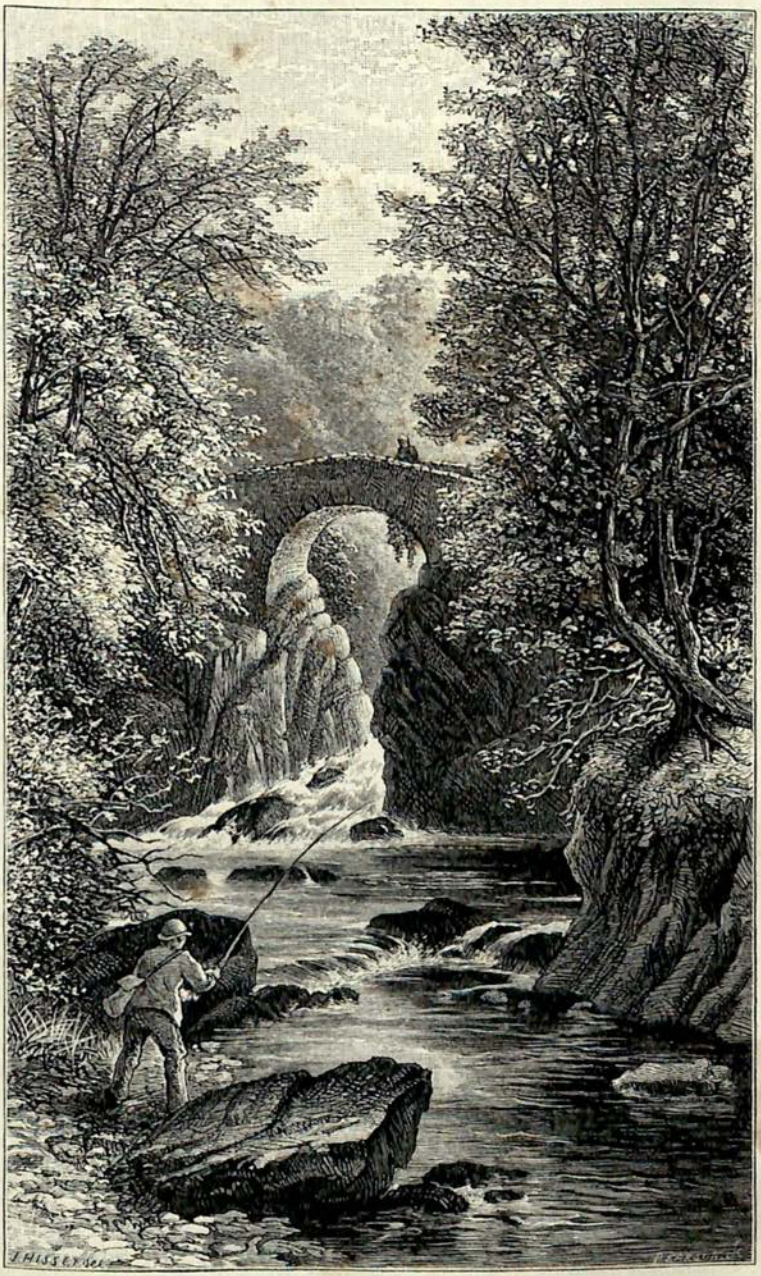
public, and the name The Fox and Hounds was not reassuring. 'What's in a name?' As far as inns go, though the assertion may appear strange, we found, as a rule, a good deal was in a name. The Fox and Hounds, The Blue Boar, The Waggon and Horses, The Barley Mow, and so forth, are generally the appellations confined to public-houses pure and simple; so therefore both the humble look and sign of the little wayside inn failed to prepossess us. However, we were in a fix; it was a case of Hobson's choice, and so we drove up to the open door. A mite of a servant-girl came up to us, a not over-tidy one; this did not improve the look of matters; but, at any rate, it was imperative that our horses should have a rest, so we demanded if we could see the landlady—presuming there was one. 'I'll go an' call 'er,' said the mite, and disappeared. We waited anxiously, doubtfully, the result. Presently the landlady made her appearance, and we were most delightfully surprised with her. 'Could we put our horses up, and could we have rooms?' we inquired. We felt rather uneasy about the rooms, but thought we might as well see what the place afforded. 'You can put the horses up,' she replied, 'but I'm not quite sure about rooms; however, if you will please to step inside we'll see what we can do.' So we sent the tired horses at once round to the stables, that they might have all the rest possible, and half hopefully, half fearfully, entered the primitive-looking hostel. Along some comfortless stone passages we were shown, which did not tend to raise our spirits or expectations; but a most agreeable and unexpected surprise was in store for us. At the end of the bare dreary passage we were ushered into a room fairly

comfortably furnished, with sundry fishing-rods and creels about; the room had a habitable cheerful look; perhaps it was because we expected so little we were pleased with it; however that may be, the sight of it wonderfully raised our spirits, and my wife whispered to me, 'I think we might manage to stay here.' Then the landlady said, 'I suppose you only want to remain over the night?' We reassured her on this point, though we could not exactly understand the purport of her question. 'Then,' she said, 'I think I can manage to give you a bed; you see I've got some fishing gents a-staying here, but they've gone to Barnstaple for the day to get some fresh tackle; and as they said as how they would not be back till to-morrow morning, rather than turn you away I'm sure you could have their room for the night.' The final result was, we decided to stay, and we found all things, though a little rough, clean. A fire was lighted for us in the sitting-room, and it looked quite cheerful—what a deal a fire will do! Then tea was served, and an excellent tea it was; the simmering kettle on the hob spoke a welcome to us; the saline odour of the ham and eggs, the delicious-looking cream—thick Devonshire cream—the fresh butter and home-baked bread, tempted us to make a capital meal; and in truth we felt heartily ashamed of our first evil forebodings. A very happy, jolly evening we spent in that little room; the only puzzle to us was how such an excellent hostelrie (of its kind) could flourish in such an utterly out-of-the-world spot; so we got hold of the landlady, and had a chat with her, which quickly solved the mystery. There was some capital trout fishing in the neighbourhood, and this remote tiny inn was supported

wholly by the followers of the gentle craft. Long life to them!

I am sure we owe a deep debt of gratitude to the fishing fraternity, for in many an out-of-the-world forsaken-looking spot, had it not been for the little inns they support, I really know not what we should have done—especially in some of the remoter parts of Wales and Yorkshire. Rough some of these anglers' hostels are without doubt, but, as an invariable rule, clean, and with cleanliness one can put up with a good deal of roughing it: ay, and enjoy the roughing, too. Such trifling hardships (if they are worthy of the name) are just the salt that gives zest to such a tour as ours. But, however else you may rough it, we always found at these anglers' inns the food to be plentiful and good, and found as well as such that we should require 'grog' before we retired to rest was taken as a matter of course; so therefore whether we drank it or not we ordered a supply 'for the good of the house.' Moreover, when any fishermen were present we always discovered them to be very excellent company, though their stories of wonderful catches—growing bigger ever, and bigger as the night advanced and the 'grog' was from time to time replenished—had to be taken *cum grano salis*. Many a pleasant evening have we spent in their goodly company, and many more I look forward still to spending.

An angler's holiday must surely be a very pleasant one; like the artist, as a rule—lucky fellow that he is!—he revels in the cream of scenery. How delightful must it be to follow along some quiet flowing river, or to wander up some boulder-strewn stream, watching the waters splashing and tumbling from rock to rock,



A DEVONSHIRE TROUT STREAM.

listening to its musical gurgling, varied now and again, it may be, by the drowsy humming of some old water-wheel, which mingles its melody with that of the falling water and rippling of the stream. Then there is the companionable rustling of the summer breezes through the trees overhead, the chanting of the birds, who never seem to heed a harmless fisherman, the droning of wandering bees, besides a hundred other rest-bestowing sounds that come wafted to him on every breeze. Then his surroundings are eminently picturesque—grey boulder, ancient weather-tinted bridge, fresh green flower-decked mead, waving wood, ever changing as he goes along. Each day he has stored his mind with enough of beauty to fill his heart with sweetness, and his thoughts with gladsome memories that can never fade. Should he return home with a heavy creel and a light heart, so much the better; but, sport or no sport, surely a day spent amidst so many delights is a something to be gratefully thankful for. The morning light revealed to us that our little inn was situated in a wealth of scenic loveliness, standing as it did in a sheltered nook of a tranquil valley, with blue hills and waving woods around, and, to complete the charms of the spot, near by a peaceful uncommercial river glided slothfully along, silently as though afraid of disturbing the calm serenity of all things. A fishful-looking green-banked river it was, opal-hued, refreshing to gaze upon. Had not our time been so fully occupied sketching, we should have been sorely tempted to get our rod from out the phaeton, and try to land one of its silvery speckled inhabitants.

We were in no hurry to leave our stilly retreat—why should we be? Was not time made for slaves—and

railway travellers? We felt where we were so delightfully remote from the unquiet world, so utterly at peace, that we grew quite enraptured with our secluded resting spot, and so we made the excuse of our horses being tired to loiter about till midday; indeed we had so fallen in love with the place that had it been possible we would have stayed over another night at our humble but no longer despised hostel.

Barnstaple we decided should be our next halt, by rough map calculation some twenty miles away. So thither we drove, following along the wooded valley, with the gentle-flowing river ever keeping us gladsome company. A lovely valley truly; one as beautiful as softly sloping hills, tree-clad and emerald-hued, bright green flowery meads, and a sparkling gleaming river could make it; and adown on all this a mellow golden sunshine shone. What more could the heart of man or blest traveller desire? So fair all things seemed that we almost felt the scene could not be real, and that we should suddenly wake up, and find it but the fleeting vision of a dream.

It was a most enjoyable drive; the road was excellent, level, and smooth, and we trotted gaily along; a great contrast altogether to the vile by-lanes we just managed to get over the day before. Goodness knows how it was we did not come utterly to grief upon them. All things combined to make us very happy that day, and in the lightness of her heart 'madam' would sing snatches of songs as we journeyed along. Merely to exist we felt to be a pleasure supreme. Who was it wrote 'Is Life worth Living?' I should strongly recommend the author to take a driving tour.

The country we passed through that day was be-

witchingly beautiful, the scenery was idyllic, the very embodiment of peacefulness and gentleness, charming us with its constantly changing surprises and endless pictures of rural contentment—a sheltering homely landscape that made our hearts go out to it, as its soft sweetness entered into us, a landscape to dwell in the memory for ever and a day. Fortunately for fair Devon she possesses no large manufacturing towns, and so her sylvan scenes are not spoilt by mines or gigantic mills, and are besides comparatively untouched by the respect-nothing hands of the contractor or modern builder.

Eligible residences raised for the *nouveaux riches* are delightfully conspicuous by their absence; residences in which outward show is the first consideration, and therefore, as intended, terribly assertive, eyesores, destroying the harmony of the landscape. It is a sad pity that man by his want of taste should thus so often utterly ruin, by the structures he raises, some of the most lovely scenes. In the course of our travels we have noticed many instances of this kind, alas! The more distressing is this when a little care and love for the beautiful might cause these very buildings to become a pleasing feature in the prospect instead of the very opposite. Simple or grand, a beautiful building, in harmony with its surroundings, is always a delight to look upon. What a pity we have so few such delights!

There was something very peace-giving in that drive, restful to the mind; the cause of this being, I think, to a great extent in our having always by our side the tranquil river. To me there is a something very soothing in the gentle gliding of such a stream, the

soft murmurous, hushful rippling of its waters is the very poetry of subdued sound—Nature's lullaby with which she sings world-weary souls to rest. Lie down on the cool grassy bank by the side of such a stream upon a warm summer's noon, shut your eyes and listen to the low cadences of sounds, rising and falling, but always in a monotone; listen to the slumberous repeated ripple, ripple, ripple, the liquid silvery wash, wash, wash, as the glistening waters glide for ever by, in sunshine and shadow, over deep and pebbly shallow, reflecting all the while the glories of many wooded banks and bringing down bright bits of the blue sky from above—and tell me if in all the world there is anything more restful or calm-bestowing?

Then the easy-flowing curving lines of a river lead the eye and mind far away, gently, almost unknowingly—away, away into a dreamy infinity. The eye, without being aware of it, is pleased with all these graceful curves; they blend insensibly one into the other; there are no harsh straight lines to arrest its progress; the vision led thus glides onward and onward till it loses itself in the mystery of space.

An eminent picture dealer once gave the following advice to a rising young artist, 'Never paint a picture with a shut-in composition. People inside rooms like such pictures as suggest distance, and enable them to see—or imagine they see—right out of them into something bright and fresh beyond.' Persons who are fortunate enough to possess pictures painted thus have, as it were, so many windows to their room, each with a different prospect.

In the evening we arrived at Barnstaple, only regretting our stage had come to an end; we felt that

day as though we could have driven on for ever and wearied not. Here we found a charming old-fashioned inn, and not this alone, but with it an attentive landlady of the olden school, and duly we appreciated both.

If our ancestors knew not how to construct railways, and were unlearned in the mysteries of electricity, public-company-promoting, and the other manifold blessings of our age, one thing they could do that we cannot—build a really comfortable hotel, one suggestive of ease-taking, roomy yet cosy, spacious still homely, stately even sometimes though never forbidding, always looking a welcome: these important qualifications a modern builder never seems able to combine. One thing the builders of the past had in their favour—land was not so valuable then as now, at least in towns; the ancient hostels were therefore never cramped for room; in them you may have as far to go to your chamber as in a modern one, but it is along level corridors, not by mounting endless steps. Lifts we truly have now-a-days, but too often these are but snares for the unwary; for my experience of such is that they are always in use when required, and the waiting for your turn is more annoying and tiring than the climbing.

Barnstaple is a delightful specimen of a Devonshire town, clean, neat, picturesquely situated, set in the midst of wooded hills gently sloping, with near at hand a pleasant river winding. All Devon towns seem to me supremely agreeable, free from the smoke of manufactories and the obtrusive ugliness of their buildings; moreover they possess the rare merit of being conveniently sized, just large enough to be towns, yet small enough to allow their inhabitants easy

access, even for a very moderate walker, to country rambles in all directions; half an hour's stroll or less will lead them—lucky mortals!—to fresh green fields and along leafy lanes. No little advantage this! and what beautiful fields and lanes these Devonshire ones are! But without wandering away at all, the Barnstapleites have a charming promenade close at hand, a pleasant tree-shaded walk by the open river side, a walk affording glorious views of sloping sunlit woods and gleaming water, giving one a fine prospect of the grey old thirteenth-century bridge, many-arched and picturesquely irregular, restored and widened, however, of later years, more convenient than of old, though perhaps less beautiful.

Barnstaple is an ancient town with excellent shops, and we took the opportunity of laying in a stock of sketching materials there, besides being tempted to purchase a quantity of magazines for wet days, and of replenishing our supplies for the journey. But our first explorations were in search of a carriage builder to repair the damage to our phaeton. We had no difficulty in finding one, only we learnt nothing could be done till the morrow, as the master said all his workmen had gone home. Now, as the weather promised to keep fine, we were reluctant to lose any time. So we explained that we were on a driving tour, and would like to proceed next morning if by an extra payment this could be managed; but the impossible was not to be accomplished. However he kindly offered to come with us to the hotel yard and inspect the damage done, so that he could let us know the length of time necessary to complete repairs. Looking critically upon the crippled phaeton he laconically ex-

claimed, 'Can't be done under a day.' So we were obliged to accept the inevitable.

In one of the shop windows near our hotel we observed some curious pottery ware, pleasant in colour and charmingly quaint in form, vases of rich quiet hues, deeply glazed, with representations of dragons and I know not what other uncouth, possible and impossible, monsters, grotesque in features, twisting around them, peering forth with leering eyes; the creations evidently of a powerful imagination, wrought by cunning hands that loved their work. Quite original in design were these. We entered the shop to inquire prices and particulars, the result of which was, we made a large purchase of these goods, which were packed in a case and forwarded home to us, after our return to town, and arrived quite safely. We were not always thus fortunate, however, in sending on things we picked up during our travels; a very fine old English bracket clock we afterwards secured at Marlborough got terribly knocked about in transit, for which we compelled the railway company to compensate us. But art work once damaged, however skilfully repaired, is never quite the same thing; willing though the workman may be, he has not the feeling of the mediæval craftsman; it is this feeling that gives its peculiar charm to so much of the old work, not altogether its mere antiquity—that is a quality of itself. This ware we learnt was made by one man in Barnstaple, and called by him Barum ware; if all the work he turns out is equal to the specimens we saw, he is indeed an artist of no mean merit. As it appears only one man makes it, I should not wonder if in course of years it becomes rare, sought after, and valued by collectors.

The next day broke gloriously fine, provokingly so, as the phaeton was helpless in the hospital, and in consequence we were compelled to stay our wanderings. 'But why should we stay them?' said my wife; 'why cannot we get the knapsack out and go somewhere on foot for the day?' Why not indeed? Our free roving life had spoilt us so, we were even impatient of a day's detention, though in ever so pleasant quarters. So the knapsack was made ready, and the map scanned. Whither should we go? Our eyes alighted upon Clovelly; we had heard much of this quaint little village (who has not?), but we had never seen it: how could we occupy our time better than by making a pilgrimage thereto? Our decision was quickly made; we would take the rail on to Bideford, and ramble thence along the coast to that romantic spot, spend the night there, and return next morning. Fortunately the trains suited, and we were soon landed at Bideford; but, oh, the contrast of the railway journey to our pleasant driving stages. We felt we knew nothing of the land through which we passed, nothing of its villages, inhabitants, local peculiarities, or wayside homes; we were simply taken thither, we did not travel. However, the rail was a necessity, its speed undoubted. The locomotive is an excellent invention for those who simply want to get over as much ground as possible in a certain time, and care to know nothing of the country traversed.

Arriving at Bideford we inspected its famous bridge—a renowned structure, well endowed, wealthy, a great landowner, and a prosperous one withal. It was built where it is, tradition says, owing to a vision of the parish priest some five hundred years ago. At

that time the inhabitants were endeavouring to erect one about half a mile farther up the stream, but the work done each day was nightly pulled down by invisible hands, and eventually in despair all attempts to bridge the river were given up. Then it was the priest of the place had the vision aforesaid, and was commanded by a spirit to tell the inhabitants that the bridge must be built where it now stands, and nowhere else, otherwise as fast as any work was done it would be destroyed. How particular the spirits seem to have been about such mundane affairs in past times! How would our modern railway engineers and contractors like such interference with their schemes?

'Everyone who knows Bideford,' says Charles Kingsley, 'cannot but know Bideford Bridge; for it is the very omphalos, cynosure, and soul around which the town as a body has organised itself; and as Edinburgh is Edinburgh by virtue of its castle; Rome, Rome by virtue of its Capitol; and Egypt, Egypt by virtue of its pyramids, so is Bideford, Bideford by virtue of its bridge. All do not know that "though the foundation of the bridge is laid upon wool, yet it shakes at the slightest step of a horse," or the fact that the bridge is a veritable esquire, bearing arms of its own—a ship and bridge proper on a plain field—and owning lands and tenements in many parishes with which the said miraculous bridge has from time to time founded charities, built schools, waged suits at law, and finally (for this concerns us the most) given yearly dinners, and kept for that purpose (luxurious and liquorish bridge that it was) the best stocked cellar of wines in all Devon.' It was at Bideford that the last

execution but one in England for witchcraft took place: this was in the year 1682.

A pleasant walk of a few miles—short ones they appeared, so agreeable was our way—brought us to the 'Hobby Drive,' a private road through a beautiful park, the public strangely returning the privilege of using it kindly afforded them by stealing the ferns that grow so profusely in the sheltered combes—at least so we imagined from the numerous holes we observed where once evidently ferns had been. A delicious bit of road is this 'Hobby Drive,' tree-embowered, twining in and out of the wooded hillsides, now leading the wayfarer by green glens, adown which tiny streams murmur musically on their short journey to the all-absorbing sea, half lost to sight in a tanglement of bracken, brambles, wild flowers, and plants; and again leading towards the edge of the heights, affording, through the leafy branches of the trees, glimpses of the sparkling blue sea below, the bluer and brighter by the sudden contrast with the rich greens so close at hand. Seen thus through the thick woods, as we saw it, the sea looked like a large lake, so smooth, shipless, and waveless was it. There was little to remind one of the treacherous ocean save the vast expanse.

The view of Clovelly as you approach it from the 'Hobby Drive' is charming and romantic in the extreme. You are high up, so the horizon of the sea is high before you; great wooded cliffs, bold though so bedecked with tender greenery, are to your left; and in a sequestered nook of these lies the quaint little village, a thin irregular line of lowly cottages, mounting the hillside; and far beneath you, space-dwarfed, is the rude stone pier, with black dots around: fishing boats

these—a romance in scenery, the very perfection of picturesqueness. Southern Italy can show nothing more beautiful; were Clovelly only abroad, a long way off and difficult of access, how English travellers would rave about it! Possibly such a spot on the Continent would be hardly so clean, but what of that so long as it was out of England? However, Clovelly is peculiarly itself, characteristic, unique; there is no other spot, so far as I am aware, resembling it in the world.

And the one steep street of Clovelly, all up and down hill, how curious it is! Street—that word hardly describes it properly—it is rather a sort of cross between a mountain road and a rude rough staircase. When you ramble about Clovelly you have to climb or descend, the only two modes of progress are up or down. I might easily devote a whole chapter to attempting to describe this most original spot—two or three for that matter—but it is just one of those places that defy word description; so I will say no more, especially as a multitude of guide-book writers have written and plagiarised each other respecting it, and I have no wish to enter into any competition with them, even if I felt my poor powers equal to the task. I may, however, note one fact that struck us as being more strange than agreeable: owing to the steepness of the narrow street, our bedroom window of the New Inn, to which room we had gone, as usual, up a flight of stairs, opened right upon the heads of the people passing; a curious kind of experience.

Returning to Barnstaple we found the phaeton in the inn yard, skilfully repaired, and showing but few visible signs of its misadventures. Not only was the

work well done, but the bill was most moderate. We had a delightfully cosy sitting-room there with an ample supply of books and a local paper: these served to occupy our time the whole evening. No small fund of amusement may be often gathered from your surroundings at an inn. Often the books about are old, curious, and sometimes even rare, though little valued apparently on that account. More than once we have purchased a picture from the walls of our room, and upon a certain well-remembered occasion we became the happy possessors of a fine old brass fender, which was placed in our bedchamber to be out of the way. The landlady did not prize this, but we did; and gladly she accepted our offer for it, and said with the money she should purchase a bright new steel one, much better than the old thing, and still have cash to spare. She was well contented with the bargain, and so were we; indeed I am by no means sure if inwardly she did not apply the proverb to us about fools and their money being soon parted. The fender now adorns my smoking-room and has been much admired. In fact all about my house are gathered valued treasures collected during our many driving tours; a wonderfully varied collection of things, comprising amongst others (as the auctioneers say), antique brass sixteenth-century clocks, delightfully quaint specimens of old-time workmanship; these repaired and keeping excellent time; early English bracket clocks (not furniture makers' early English!); these, too, are all hand-made and charming to look upon, and go as well as they look. Then I have a quantity of old blue china and delf ware, and some that is not blue, a few pictures —one truly a little gem, which, framed in carved wood

gilt, cost me the alarming sum of thirty shillings!—carved oak panels, repoussé metal dishes, pewter tankards, some ancient armour, and a fine old Chippendale corner cupboard. This hunting about for curiosities adds a peculiar charm to a tour like ours.

Then the old odd books we came across ever and again afforded us no little entertainment. Here in looking into a volume of poems by a local poet we learnt that it was at Bideford

> Where Hervey wrote his 'Meditations,'
> And little thought of railway stations.

At another inn, away in the wilds of Gloucestershire, we came across a version of the National Anthem, quite new to us, which concluded with this additional verse, which we had no recollection of having seen before, and which I here transcribe more for the curiosity of my readers than any merit of the added lines:

> And when in Freedom's cause
> England's bright sword she draws,
> Oh, grant Thine aid.
> On each dread battle-field
> Make her proud foemen yield;
> Be Thou her help and shield.
> God save the King.

Local papers, too, are often very entertaining. It is strange to notice in these how little space is devoted to foreign, parliamentary, or other news of importance to the empire. A local wedding, birth, or death, the crops round about, a harvest home, a cricket match, appear to be of more consequence than the most supreme affairs of the nation; and it is the same if you drop into the bar of your inn, and listen to the conversation there; it is all concerning the limited

world around—other events, however momentous, appear of comparatively small importance—and who would have it otherwise? One is apt to smile at the paramount consequence given to trifling events, of no possible interest beyond a very limited sphere; but have we not all special interests to us supreme above all others? I pity those who can say no.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ilfracombe—The Capstone Hill—The English Climate—A tiny Inn—A never-failing Repast—Horses on the Road—Changing Scenery—Lynton—The Valley of the Rocks—Exploring—Fir Forests—Puzzling Roads—Lynmouth—A comfortable Hostel—Up the Lyndale—An Artist's and Angler's Paradise—A pleasant Occupation—A stiff Climb—Exmoor—Moorland Scenery—A Sea Picture—Gulls and their Flight—Man and Nature.

Out of Barnstaple collar work commenced at once, and continued half the way to Ilfracombe, the other portion being as continuous a descent. A beautiful country it was we passed through, and a glorious day we had for the drive. The weather of late had been very amiably disposed towards us. The cheery sunshine, its warmth pleasantly tempered by the ocean-born breezes, ozone-charged, made our stage a very delightful one. We drove on through picturesque villages, past shady dells (combes they call such in Devonshire) abounding in ferns, stately foxgloves, spreading briars, and a wealth of wild flowers; the pale-eyed forget-me-not being conspicuous amongst the number. We could not withstand the temptation to stop from time to time and gather some of these, to be carefully pressed and preserved in memory of a very happy day—one of how many?

Each dell seemed to possess its own little 'burn' chanting merrily as it went along, pleasantly breaking the rural silence with its silvery voice; we could trace

their course, even when the sparkle of their waters did not reveal them, by the luxuriant vegetation and profuse ferneries along their borders.

The, road as I have said before, was a hilly one, but the hills were not bare, green they are to their very summits, with that refreshing soft velvety green seen only to perfection in Devonshire.

And at last when we began to descend, after a rest on the way at a little tree-shaded inn, what a wide open breezy prospect we had before us! Our eyes roved over a vast expanse: there were swelling uplands sweeping inland far away, now in bright sunshine, now grey in shadow; in front of us, far down, was the shimmering sea, and beyond this again faintly showed the stormy hills of Wales. It is well worth a day's drive to revel in such a panorama.

Until of late years there was no railway to Ilfracombe, and travellers thither had to journey from Barnstaple by this road; the railway is doubtless far more convenient than the old stage coach, one of the last of its race, but we could not but feel how much bewildering beauty the change of route has caused the traveller to lose. Beauty stands but a poor chance against convenience and speed. We simply rush now-a-days to famous places, as fast as steam will carry us, never appearing to imagine or dream that there is a world of unexplored loveliness, unseen, untravelled, between our starting point and our destination. How completely have railways monopolised the traffic! whoever now thinks of travelling along the pleasant old coach roads?

The Capstone Hill with its terraced walks appeared to us to be the chief feature and attraction of

Ilfracombe; the place has also the great advantage for a summer resort of facing due north; the air is therefore cool and bracing, contrasting greatly in this respect with the hothouse atmosphere of Torquay. By the way, we speak too much of the English climate, as though Great Britain had only one, whereas on the contrary its varieties are endless, not to speak of the great contrast between the north of Scotland and the south coast—within a day's drive of even twenty miles we have frequently found a wonderful change. Has not Emerson said, 'England has a climate for every disease'? Strange we should have to go abroad for praise of that which at home we so despise.

In the evening we betook ourselves with the rest of the Ilfracombe visitors to the Capstone Promenade; here we rested, lazily listening to the band, and observing the people; the clerical element appeared in strong force, and there was a fair sprinkling of honeymooners. But we soon grew tired of noting the promenaders, and we turned from them to watch the slowly fading splendours of the dying day; the music of the band which had ceased, was well replaced by the rhythmic chanting of the sea, as wave following wave in ceaseless succession broke beneath us on the rocky shore. We sat watching till the glowing hues of molten gold and carmine glory had sobered down to a quiet silvery-grey demureness, and the stars alone shone upon the restless waters.

There was a certain indefinable magnetic influence that held us spectators there, half against our wills, observing the slow evolution of night from day; and as the darkness grew apace the measured wash, wash, wash of the incoming sea appeared to become more and

more emphatic. The outlines of the shore became softened and mysterious, only being in part revealed by the pale semi-luminous foam of the breaking waves. How long we might have sat watching and dreaming I know not—our thoughts had wandered far away—but the sound of a distant chime aroused us from our reverie and brought us back from the ideal to the real; warned thus, we retraced our steps homeward—or rather hotelward.

From Ilfracombe to Lynton is one of the most delightful drives imaginable. The country you pass through has the quality of being exceedingly varied; in the twenty miles or so you have almost all classes of scenery, though the wild and grand predominate. It is in truth a glorious road; along secluded dales and over steep hills our way led us, affording grand prospects of rocky cliffs and picturesque bays, with peeps of the glistening sea beyond, then across far-spreading moorlands till we came to a small hamlet in a deep hollow, and there we found a very tiny inn, as befitted so diminutive a place. But, tiny though it was, the little wayside hostel had stables attached, so we decided we would rest our horses there. As for ourselves we expected nothing, the place looked so humble; but one must not always judge by outside appearances. I went inside to try the ale, for the weather was hot, and if it was to be had tolerably good a draught of ale would be very acceptable. To my surprise I was asked into a 'wee' sitting-room, very 'wee' truly, but neat and clean, and with a window in proportion to its size: this looked out upon a pretty gurgling stream, the quiet plashing of its waters being the only sound that broke the stillness.

The room was refreshingly cool, and we were glad to rest in it out of the glaring sunshine. The ale proved excellent, and so we ventured to inquire what else in the way of refreshments we could have, the result being that we had a repast of ham and eggs. When all else fails, the inevitable everlasting ham and eggs can generally be procured even at the humblest house of entertainment.

On again, over bleak uplands, wind-swept by the salt-laden ocean breezes, we continued; the light bracing atmosphere was most exhilarating, a life-giving air, soft yet strong—there is no tonic in the world like a walk or drive upon some moorland height, and if near to the sea so much the better. The horses gloried in it as much as we did; they kept sniffing the thin buoyant air, tossing their heads, and prancing as though they had only just come fresh from out of their own stables, and had not already done some five hundred miles of hard work. It is a real pleasure to lovers of animals to observe how evidently they enjoy the change to the country. In spite of the constant driving, the rough roads, long and trying stages, and strange stabling, not always in country places all it should be, our horses wonderfully improved on the journey; they were neither sick nor sorry for a day during the whole extended outing. I have taken with me the same useful little pair for the past six years, driving them from one end of the kingdom to another, and have never had our excursions in any way interfered with by anything going wrong with either of my steeds.

An authority upon such matters has declared it is impossible to drive a horse day by day for the distance

of twenty miles for any length of time without his breaking down; I can only say we have done so, and upon each occasion, on returning home from our lengthened wanderings, we have brought them back to their stabling, better fitted, if required, to recommence such a journey than when they started. Of course we took all the care we could of our animals; but for all this, they as well as ourselves had now and again to rough it. But the little roughing we experienced was to us rather enjoyable than otherwise; our steeds, however, knew nothing of this excitement; they had to put up from time to time with cold and draughty stabling and poor corn, and do their continued work as well. Yet withal they benefited as did we ourselves by the constant change of air; my wife would have it even that they delighted in the scenery, but this was going a trifle too far. It is astonishing what a lot of work a horse will do; yes, and thrive on it if he is only properly treated; and here for the benefit of my readers who may not have seen it I take the liberty of giving 'The Horse's Petition to his Driver:'

Up hill—whip me not.
Down hill—hurry me not.
On level road—spare me not.
Loose in stable—forget me not.
Of hay and corn—rob me not.
Of clean water—stint me not.
With sponge and brush—neglect me not.
Of soft dry bed—deprive me not.
Tired or hot—leave me not.
Sick or cold—chill me not.
With bit and reins—oh, jerk me not.
When you're angry—strike me not.

We presently parted company from the open moors and struck upon a little wooded glen, though still we

kept high up amongst the hills; the rustling of the wind-stirred foliage, the pleasant woven shade the branching trees cast around, and the tender greenery of all things, made the contrast from the bare vigorous exposed moorlands seem great indeed. A little stream, too, made the narrow vale glad with its voiceful company, and gay with its sparkling silvery brightness, and the richly tinted woods echoed with the melody of many unseen songsters. After the sense of stillness and space of the moors how doubly companionable seemed the unpremeditated bird music! how snug-looking, by way of change, that little wooded winding glen! It is the day of small things as well as great ones; England would not be England without its unnumbered feathered songsters; we seldom heed them because they are so common, and their existence seems so natural; but without their constant warbling and twittering the silence of the country would be almost painful, depressing rather than restful; we require such subdued sounds to give us the full sense of repose; they simply help to mark the general quietude.

These scenic contrasts and changes from the grand to the soft and sylvan, and from the sylvan to the barren and bleak again; these glorious admixtures of the rural, marine, and wild, of nature tamed and free, humanised and primæval, gradually and naturally giving place one to the other, make any monotony in a driving tour an impossibility. *Ennui* was to us a thing unknown, undreamt of, incomprehensible; the change of scene on the way is so continuous, and the character of it varies in such a manner; these, combined with the many incidents of the road so frequently occurring, afford such a constant fund of interest that dullness on

a driving tour (in England at any rate) is something that cannot exist.

And next we came to far-famed and justly renowned Lynton, one of the most beautiful spots on the British coast, I think I may safely say *the* most beautiful. Indeed, it would be hard to imagine anything more perfect or to conceive beforehand such a wonderful entrancing combination of wood and hill, of rock and river, of bold crags and landbound sea, for this latter is terminated on the horizon by the blue changeful line of the Welsh coast. We found here an excellent hotel, as was to be expected so far from railways, situated on a wood-crowned height, with fir-clad slopes stretching down to a golden ocean, which latter repeated the glories of the luminous sky above. It was impossible for us to remain indoors that evening, so we wandered out amongst the tossing pines and rare shrubs that led from the garden of our inn downward towards the sea. What a gorgeous prospect lay before us as—

> The evening sun descending
> Set the clouds on fire with redness,
> Burned the broad sky like a prairie,
> Left upon the level water
> One long track and trail of splendour.

No words—least of all any words of mine—can describe the tranquil loveliness of these Devonshire sunsets, the commingled glory of sea and air, of earth and sky. A peace as of paradise seems to rest on all around. The palpitating atmosphere is charged with a flowing light permeating everywhere, diffusing its golden glory all around. Living so much in cities as many of us do, we little observe the wonderful sky scenery that this cloud-loving England of ours everywhere so plentifully

affords; possibly we have grown to forget that such a thing exists. Beautiful, even spectacular sunsets are by no means of rare occurrence. Indeed, so accustomed to these had we become during our out-door life that we looked forward almost each day to the evening, as a matter of course, for scenic sunset effects.

Lynton has been greatly lauded by the guide-book writers, but it will stand all the lavish encomiums that they have bestowed upon it. Its rare beauties are beyond the power of being over-praised. People, however, get so accustomed to the usual run of guide-book panegyrics that as a rule they allow a fair discount off them. Having exhausted his stock vocabulary of glowing adjectives upon less lovely spots, when the writer of such works has a gem of scenery such as Lynton or Lynmouth to describe he has no reserve of power left.

Next morning we drove through the wild Valley of the Rocks; grand and wild it certainly is, but the impressiveness of its desolation was spoilt the day we were there by numberless excursionists laughing and calling to each other: these had evidently been landed by a steamer—steamboats are as great sinners as railways in this respect; at any available beauty-spot they mercilessly disgorge crowded hordes of trippers, the most provoking part being, as I have said before, that these said excursionists would enjoy themselves equally well in less choice localities, they only want an outing and fresh air, somewhere where they can run and romp about, shout and make themselves happy and thoroughly tired. Impressive scenery requires to be beheld in all its solitary grandeur; there is one thing

it will not stand, and that is noisy cheap-trippers; they strike a chord totally out of harmony with it; their proper place is on Brighton beach, or upon Margate or Ramsgate sands, where at any rate they are in accordance with their surroundings.

Leaving, then, the Valley of the Rocks to the tender mercies of the careless and care-for-nothing crowd, we proceeded onwards over rough and hilly roads in search of tripperless lands, and we found them. We explored a tract of country that abounded in glorious prospects, wide open and free: these by-ways are not in the guide books, and so we were, as my wife said, 'severely left alone,' and for the rest of the day so lonely was our road that we met not a soul. The coast scenery about these parts is simply magnificent; both in colour and form the rocks are extremely fine, and the frequent broken bays, crag-guarded, combine picturesqueness in a manner that makes them hopeless to describe, and equally hopeless to attempt to sketch, so impossible is it to render their characteristic loveliness. Grand scenery alone is not so difficult to depict, provided the canvas be large enough, nor soft sylvan beauty of necessity a hard task; but to combine these two opposites successfully is the work of a master hand.

We had a good deal of rough driving, exploring an utterly unknown land(to us), and a most romantic one it proved to be. After much pleasant wandering we determined at last that we would strike inland, and endeavour to find, if possible, a route over the moors back to Lynton. A rather hazardous venture this, as the country was bleak, the roads were hilly, narrow, and guiltless of sign-posts, and the inhabitants were few.

The latter of course, by some strange ordinance of fate, are never visible when wanted, and in their absence we could only guess by the direction the roads took —often, by the way, changing confusedly—whither they might lead us. But such uncertainties, provided the weather be fine and the horses fresh, are very enjoyable, and though no adventures may occur, there is still always the feeling that one of some kind is just possible. We eventually hit upon a road leading through a gloomy forest of sombre pines, tall trees gaunt and stiff and prim, their dark pointed crests telling out sharply against the bright blue sunlit sky; a grey-green gloom below, all brightness above. Along the upright forest pillars our vision wandered, down lengthened vistas, like the long-drawn aisles of some wonderful cathedral wrought by fairy hands, for never did man raise an edifice such as this. How dim and blue appeared the deep woods' recesses, what a solemn silence reigned around, for these pine forests are strangely still; the thick fallen layer of the needle-like leaves, preserved long from decay by their resinous qualities, seems to hush and deaden all sound. How balmy, too, the wild warm wind felt, coming laden to us with the aromatic odours of the many trees. There is no damp decaying vegetation beneath them; the pine-needles shrivel up rather than perish; thus the dry soft healing atmosphere of these woods is most grateful to the invalid, especially in a moist climate like ours. Moreover they will grow on the poorest soil, and flourish exceedingly, where other plants would have a hard struggle to exist. I often wonder why our waste sandy lands are not more frequently planted with these instead of producing nothing.

Eventually, after losing ourselves more than once, and after many aimless wanderings, we got safely back to Lynton, not however till the gloaming had overtaken us. These country by-paths (in Devonshire above all other places) seem to lead everywhere and yet nowhere in particular: often they start fair and with golden promises—therein the danger lies—but trust them not farther than you can see; it is just as likely as not that after leading you along hopefully for a mile or more they will without any apparent reason gradually grow worse and worse—so gradually that you keep on trusting that at each bend things will improve—till they land you helplessly upon an open moor, the road vanishing into a mere track, which in its turn again loses itself in half a dozen minor paths utterly impracticable for carriages; or it may be after numberless windings, just when you feel sure you are arriving somewhere, you will arrive at an old disused quarry, much to your disgust, or perchance you may find your road suddenly ending at an out-of-the-world farmhouse (not an uncommon occurrence), in all of which cases there is nothing for it but to retrace your course—a not very inspiriting proceeding. Such at least is our experience of country by-roads, more especially in hilly districts, where moorlands and quarries abound; but for all this they are delightful wandering; they lead one into the very heart of the land, into remote unheeded unknown spots, whose primitive simplicity carries the wayfarer back long centuries. It is another England they take you to, an old-world land where superstitions, quaint customs, and long-forgotten prejudices linger still, and kindly hearts abound—secluded spots where yet remain



LYNMOUTH BRIDGE.

Some remnants of the good old time;
And still within the valleys there
They hold the kindred title dear.

The next day we decided we would drive down to Lynmouth, at the foot of the hill, and if we could get accommodation at the little inn there remain over a few days at that charming village, and from thence explore at our leisure the beauties of the Lyn valley, and see something besides of the wilder grandeurs of Exmoor. No Englishman knows the full loveliness of his own land who has not seen Lynton and Lynmouth. Lynton is at the top of the hill, Lynmouth lies far down in the vale below, and between the two is about the steepest bit of road we have ever traversed: we actually found it necessary to tie up the wheels of our carriage, and in spite of this precaution, and with the brake hard on besides, the phaeton ran upon our horses. However we got down all safely, for which we were grateful, and found at the Lyndale Hotel excellent quarters, a motherly good-hearted landlady, a most obliging landlord, and capital stabling as well—all these good things unexpected, too. A cheerful little sitting-room was offered us with a balcony looking down upon the tumbling Lyn, and the quaintly picturesque village, with a peep of the sea beyond. This was more than we had bargained for: truly our 'lines had fallen in pleasant places.' So comfortable indeed were we made that evening that we thereupon decided we would make this quiet and delightfully situated hostel our head-quarters for a week. Landlord, landlady, ostler, and everyone connected with the place appeared so eager to please, we felt quite in the mood that Shenstone must have done when he

wrote his famous lines in praise of his inn, as before mentioned.

The next day we devoted to a ramble, armed with sketch-book and fishing-rod, up the Lyn valley; we went afoot; a more charming ramble could not be conceived. From Lynmouth to Watersmeet, a very fairies' glen, the scenery is simply enchanting, a picture all the way, a revelation of beauty, a poet's ideal valley, a painter's paradise. Truly Nature here is lavish in her gifts; it is the very poetry of scenery. A poem of interlacing overhanging trees, of grey moss-begrown boulders, of fern- and flower-bedecked banks, of splashing, sparkling, glancing, and gleaming waters, with here and there quiet pools where the stream for a moment stilly sleeps; a poem of rainbow-hued cascades and mimic falls glittering as with a thousand diamonds, of foam-jewelled rocks, with glorious peeps ever and anon above of purple uplands all glowing in the sun—what a ramble for a hot summer noon! What a delicious spot to dream in and forget all the cares of the outer world!

The Lyn reminded us of a Welsh river, with all the luxuriance of Devonshire foliage and soft greenery superadded; a rare combination and one as bewitchingly beautiful as rare.

A merry tumbling, chattering, laughing little river is the Lyn, a stream that almost seems to speak to you with its silvery voice. Who could be dull or sorrowful in such soothing, joyous company? And who can translate into words the happy language of such wild wayward streams? What music is like to theirs? I would any time rather listen to the wordless song, to the many mingled melody of a mountain burn, than to

any opera, however fine; in the same way my ear is more enchanted with the wonderful freely given careless song of a skylark than with the most carefully trained voice of a highly paid *prima donna*; which preference may be bad taste on my part—or may not. But the ear requires educating to fully appreciate the subtle melody of Nature's music.

Of course we made but slow progress—it is towns that teach men to hurry along. We took our lunch with us and picnicked in a most delightful shady nook by the side of a dreamy pool. We spent a good deal of time in sketching, too, for every turn revealed an enchanting picture, self-composed; with rocks, water, trees just where an artist would wish them. It was not necessary to search for subjects; we were embarrassed with so many good things, the difficulty was in knowing what not to do.

There is one great and valuable quality the ability to draw gives to its possessor—it reveals to him the hidden beauties of a scene. Sketching trains the eye to observe the wealth of form and colour, of light and shade, that exists everywhere around us. A man who has painted much from nature sees far more in a day's walk or drive, has more of the beauty of common things revealed to him, than another whose perceptive qualities have not been equally called into play. The amount of colour there is everywhere, even upon a so-called wet day, can hardly be credited save by those who may have taken a country walk with an artist and have had such specially pointed out to them. I make bold to say that no one but he who has painted a spot, however beautiful it may be, knows a tithe of its charms. Even a simple boulder, water-worn and

weather-stained, lichen-encrusted and many-tinted, with its countless changeful forms (in truth a mountain in miniature), reveals all its wonders of varied shapes and blended colours only to a long and loving study. Take again merely a square yard of an old wall; it will be found on close inspection to abound in a wealth of subdued colours, little dreamed of till one attempts to realise it on canvas or paper. Even that sleepy pool of oily-looking water below the boulder is a revelation of tints and tones and flowing lines. Watch it carefully but for a few minutes, observe its countless reflected hues of greens and greys and golds, astonishingly blended, and mingled with these notice the waving lines of palpitating reflected blues of the sky; then besides these there is the local colouring of the water itself, raw siennas, browns, transparent greys commingling and contrasting; so full of variety, so wonderfully abounding in detail, so exquisitely finished are even the smallest things of nature. That little pool of water, that seemed only at first sight a small space of unvaried green or grey, when you come to paint or study it, how much, very much, more there is in it than you previously imagined! So it is with Nature everywhere: her handiwork overflows with unheeded loveliness, yet she never repeats herself. So the painter has his own exceedingly great reward. How often is it not the case that the average mortal never appears to have any idea of the picturesqueness of a spot till an artist has translated it for him!

> For don't you mark? we're made so that we love
> First when we see them painted things we have passed
> Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
> And so they are better painted—better to us,
> Which is the same thing. Art was given for that.

Thus is it that the pleasant occupation of sketching from nature gives to one a special interest in scenery, and an unexpected (it may be) insight into the quiet beauties and wonderful varied colouring of all natural things not to be discovered in any other way. Even a hurried sketch may be of great value to its possessor as a memorandum of scenery, as with its aid he may in imagination be able to bring the prospect or spot from which he took it once more before him. A well-filled sketch-book, what a pleasing memento it forms of places one has visited on a holiday ramble! It is a miniature picture gallery, as it were, recalling various delightful days, scenes, incidents, and associations. How much more gratifying, too, is it to possess pictures that we ourselves have done, with all their little histories, than to own a painting simply purchased?

The next morning broke cloudy and grey, with a gusty wind—not a day for the wooded valley, but just the very one for exploring Exmoor. So our willing horses—fresh after their rest—were put to, and we climbed up the long steep hill that leads out of Lyn mouth towards the moors. Our road rose and rose, till we found ourselves on the top of Countisbury Hill, having risen in the world some 1,100 feet. What a superb headland is this! what a glorious ocean and land panorama it affords! A tossing watery waste on the one side, a sea of wild mountainous moorlands on the other; these in a bewildering crowded confusion, the circling horizon being bounded by an indigo blue, uncertain, indistinct; even the rugged outlines of the stormy Welsh hills were hardly distinguishable from clouds. A prospect of vastness—space expressing.

Standing on the summit of this bold headland, this mighty natural rampart against the wrathful sea, facing the four winds of heaven, one cannot but be impressed by the wild, weird aspect of the scene; the eye wanders whither it will, unrestrained all around, limited only by the illimitable heavens. Besides the universal grass, the rolling uplands abound in heather, bracken, whortleberry, and gorse; these are diversified by treacherous bogs, peat producing; in the more protected vales or combes are little forests of thick stunted wind-tortured trees. So, though repeated, the prospect is to a certain extent varied, colour as well as forms agreeably changing.

Although in these latter days small farms, albeit unprofitable ones, and scattered patches of cultivation have encroached upon the outskirts of this bit of wild England, and although unfrequented paths have been turned into comparatively frequented roads, terribly rough and hilly ones truly, still passable on wheels, yet this glorious spreading moorland remains much as of yore, and is to-day as yesterday the home of the wild red deer; over it they rove, as free and as unmolested as in the olden days before England had become a name or made her history. This is the only spot south of the Tweed, I believe, where this is the case, and where the red stag is hunted, as in the merry times gone by, times when stringent forest laws protected the lordly game, and outlaws flourished exceedingly, and fearlessly poached the king's preserves, in defiance of all precautions and penalties. It is pleasant to feel and know there yet remains a corner of English ground, unimproved, natural as Nature made and deemed it best, and well out of

sight and sound of the iron way, free as the wild winds that, unchecked, blow over it from the levelling influences of our advanced civilisation with all its ugly utilities, burdens, artificialness, slavery to conformity and competitive unrest.

Moorland scenery possesses a special charm to those who love nature unspoilt; it has a peculiar character of its own. Even in our over-peopled England, a land abounding with the associations of man, a country where above all others (save perhaps Holland) he has proclaimed his mastership, the moors remain, what they have ever been, unconquered and unconquerable. Save for the roads, we see them now much as they appeared to our savage forefathers who first trod their wild wastes in the remote unrecorded past. Then the utter solitude and impressive silence of the moors are almost are striking as their untamableness. Truly they seem as changeless as the sea. Dreary, desolate, disconsolate, as seen beneath a cold grey brooding sky, they take a strong hold upon an imaginative mind. For untold ages, from generation to generation have they been thus. A rough rude landscape, like a portion of an unfinished world; as forsaken almost, too; for on them you are alone with the earth around and sky above: such desolate loneliness might even disgust the strictest anchorite. A picture of gloomy grandeur!

Rocks of strange form, rugged and weather-worn, scarred and bleached by the exposure to the countless storms of centuries, strew these vast undulating wildernesses; rocks frost-splintered and storm-sculptured into such eccentric shapes that a fanciful mind may picture out of them almost what it will: here the ruins

of some prehistoric city raised of old by giants' hands, there a dread-looking sphinx, solemn, silent, mysterious, inscrutable, and so forth. The likenesses to things earthly and unearthly are limited only by the powers of imagination of the beholder.

Solitude, silence, and space, combined with a certain savage physiognomy, are the prevailing characteristics of the moors. Such scenes, the very antithesis of the crowded noisy city, have a powerful charm for a vigorous mind; and how strongly do they not contrast with the general peaceful pastoral scenery of rural England. To the town-dweller, whose prospect for a great portion of the year is so sadly limited to the length of a dreary street, the very freedom of a vision so far extended is of itself a supreme delight.

But though so wild and desolate, the moors have their beauties—stern manly beauties, for there is nothing tame or small about them. What expansive sky-scapes do they not afford! Often at first sight seemingly sombre in tone, still a more familiar acquaintance shows them to be abounding in a subtle harmony of colour—the purple of heather, the yellow of bracken, the gold of many mosses, the green of the grass, the many tints of the weather-stained rocks combine to form a glorious and by no means colourless whole—and when this is enlivened by the sparkle of running water or the gleam of some quiet pool lighted up by a stray sunbeam, these lonely wastes seem almost lovely.

Some of the peeps of the sea we had from the moor-crowned heights overlooking the Bristol Channel were very fine, with their setting of bold cliffs in the foreground and Welsh mountains in the distance. Seldom one gets a sea-scape thus; the usual long

monotonous straight line of the horizon is the weak point in ocean views. From the top of one headland we looked down upon far-stretching leagues of vexed waters, churning themselves into a milk-white foam, where, wind-lashed, the waves dashed and chafed against the mighty rocks, so steadfast and immovable, in such contrast to the moving masses of the restless sea. A grey sky was overhead as suited the scene, far away the distance was of a deep indigo blue, nearer at hand the waters were of a leaden tone broken only by the white crests of the incoming waves. A small coasting sloop beating out to sea was all that told of man's handiwork, her sides glistening as she rolled. The dull boom, boom, boom of the surging billows as they broke majestically one after the other upon the rocks below came ever upward wafted to us, Ocean's solemn thunder hymn. Above and beneath us sea-gulls circled round and round, uttering peevish plaintive cries; we could not but observe with how little exertion these birds maintain themselves in mid-air and control their flight. How they will circle round and round, now suddenly dart downwards after their prey with hardly a movement of the wing. Here is one of Nature's secrets as yet undiscovered. More even than this I have noticed these birds from on board a transatlantic mail steamer, following in her wake for nearly the entire day, doing at least ten miles an hour, often much more, and yet with how little apparent exertion! how few flutterings of the wing! I have stood on deck and watched them in perfect wonderment.

That sea-scape formed a grand picture and held us spectators long, though there was not much that went

to compose it. A grey brooding sky, a storm-tossed sea, a solitary schooner, some crags, rough rocks, and a number of gulls—that was all, and yet any one thing further added we felt would have spoilt it. Without the little vessel struggling successfully with Nature in her wildest mood, there would have been a want, the prospect would have been too desolate, even awesome; but that suggestion of humanity bravely fighting Nature, daring her in her rage, frail yet strong, gave the necessary feeling of security. Man here as elsewhere was the master, over adverse circumstances triumphant!

Returning to our excellent quarters at Lynmouth that evening, how exquisitely soft, tender, and beautiful all things seemed—like a bit of fairyland almost, contrasted with our wild day's wanderings. The air, too, how balmy—the landscape, how dreamlike, ideal! There are few more lovely, restful, or peaceful spots on earth than Lynmouth.

CHAPTER XVII.

An Englishman's Prerogative—An unsophisticated Boniface—Lovely Lynmouth—A Chat with a modern Builder—A Wayside Glen—South Molton—Works of Art—A Cure for Deafness—The Pleasure of Driving for Driving's Sake—The Carriage for Road Work—Unknown England—An Artist's River—Bampton—New Wine in Old Bottles—Town in Country—Wiveliscombe—Milverton—Taunton—Town Hotels *versus* Country Inns—A fine Church—Bridgewater—A Speciality—The Beauties of the Clouds—A Foxhunting Squire—The last Battle on English Ground—Glastonbury—An ancient Hostel—A ghostly Chamber.

We spent a very pleasant week at Lynmouth, and left that picturesque spot and our snug quarters with great regret. Exceedingly comfortable did both our good host and hostess make us at their little inn, and when we left they asked if we would mind writing our names in the 'visitors' book.' So well had we been treated, so much had we enjoyed our stay—how could we refuse so simple a request? although, as a rule, it must be confessed, we had a deep-rooted objection to inscribing our names wherever we went. Still all rules are open to exceptions, and in this case we willingly broke through our aversion, and did what was required of us; moreover, as the worthy landlord had but recently started hotel-keeping, we deemed it only just to add a remark as to the hospitable manner in which we had been cared for, and as to the kindly attentions we had received.

It is an Englishman's prerogative to grumble when

he deems himself badly treated; I am afraid, however, he is not quite as ready to bestow praise where deserved, and too much given to accept the good things provided as a matter of course; yet it is hardly fair to complain on the one hand, and on the other to withhold all commendation when equally merited. Not only were we made exceedingly comfortable, but our bill was most moderate and we fared excellently. Fresh trout we had each morning regularly for breakfast, clotted cream with every meal, home-baked bread, sweet tasted (a great treat to us this); Exmoor mutton, the perfection of tenderness and full of flavour; whortleberry tarts, a novelty not to be despised; and many other good things, good in themselves, and well cooked besides. Who can say that we did not fare well—sumptuously indeed?

These unpretending inns are delightful resting-spots; they charm one by their homeliness. To show how unsophisticated was our good-natured Boniface, one day we thought we would venture to treat ourselves with a bottle of wine, and so ordered some hock from the servant; eventually, after waiting some time, she returned with a bottle of ginger beer! It appears she gave our order to the landlord, who after a consultation with his better half concluded it was a bottle of 'pop' we surely required! This is a fact, incredible though it may appear; it must, however, be remembered our host was a young beginner in his profession. We found out afterwards he actually had this rare unknown wine in his cellar. Possibly he had been a small moorland farmer, port, sherry, and home-made wines being the limit of his knowledge of such articles. On the other hand, he was well informed about all rural matters,

and possibly my evident ignorance concerning certain country affairs was as astonishing to him as was his ignorance of certain wines to myself.

Surely Lynmouth never appeared more lovely than on the day we left it; so restful and peaceful it seemed to us that even when the horses were at the door we felt half inclined to order them back to the stables again, and stay on. But we had many miles of pleasant country still to traverse before we should reach home, and we felt the longer we lingered the harder it would be to tear ourselves away from this enchanting spot. So saying good-bye to our kindly-hearted host and hostess, we reluctantly bade farewell to the fairy-like vale of the Lyn. 'Dear little Lynmouth!' said my wife half to herself, 'I hope some day we shall see you again.' Then aloud to me, 'Surely it is the very sweetest place in the whole world.' Truly it was a pleasing prospect we looked upon, the pretty little village lying at the foot of the wood-girt combe, with glimpses ever and again of the sparkling fish-filled Lyn; a village as picturesque in itself as in its situation; it seems indeed almost like a natural growth. So mellow-toned and in harmony with its surroundings is it, the idea of being purposely built for man's convenience never strikes one. Long, long may it retain its simple rustic old-world look and peace-giving quietude. Never may the screech of the steam whistle disturb the reposeful tranquillity of this secluded haven of rest and beauty. Never may its romantic glens be scarred by the sacrilegious hands of the railway contractor—that sworn enemy of beauty, that apostle of utility and creator of ugliness. Ever may its wooded solitudes and lovely purple-stained moors be free from

the reproach of staring signal-posts of white and red, and long lines of telegraph poles, and may the noisome smoke and sulphureous vapours of the iron monster never pollute its heather-scented light pure airs. The railway is an excellent thing in its place, but its place is very far from these beauty spots of old England. The iron road is a great spoiler of scenery; it has even dared to trespass along the lovely and hallowed valley of the Wye. Unfortunately valleys form the easiest route, and therefore the most inexpensive one, for it to follow; and what cares engineer or contractor for scenery, or whether the shareholder gets a dividend, so long as the line is constructed, and they are the constructors thereof?

But yet more to be dreaded is the speculative builder, with his levelling mania, flattening, smoothing, and parading all around, raising stucco terraces and marine crescents, hideous to look upon, turning each seaside resort into one monotonous uniformity of common-place. Enterprising builders and civil engineers, without the assistance of the railway contractor, have a wonderful capacity for sweeping ruthlessly away all that is charming and natural, and converting a simple primitive seaside hamlet into a dreariness of staring houses, with fashionable hotels, esplanades, desirable villas, and the inevitable pier, with all the many other things that go to make a modern watering-place; the result being that of course all individuality and character is for ever lost, each resort under the altered circumstance being as much like the other as these enterprising individuals can make it. Originality, picturesqueness, and quaintness are words not in their dictionary; common-sense is what they pride them-

selves upon. 'Sound common-sense, sir; I like things plain and good; no nonsense about me; I 'ate your 'igh hart.' Such was the reply a fashionable seaside builder made to a certain remark of mine, spoken one day whilst looking at—not admiring—a row of buildings he had just erected. 'But "plain and good" does not always mean substantial,' I ventured to suggest, pointing my remark by jumping upon one of his not too firm floors. 'Well, I never!' was his answer; 'you are an uncommon hard gentleman to please. Now this house will last sixty years or so—as long as the lease, any way—and we shall possibly be all dead and gone by that time; what's the good of wasting materials upon posterity? They don't pay anything for them, do they? I see you're evidently no business man; you'd never make a fortune at building—you'd precious soon lose one.' I was obliged to confess that he was probably correct in his surmises, whereon we parted, though, I fear, with but a poor opinion of each other. These chance gossips open one's eyes, and, alas! tell plainly, all too plainly, that our England of to-day is not the England of the past.

We had a bleak road at first over some wind-swept uplands, which gave us extensive prospects all around, and afforded us fine views over Exmoor, with its bold sweeping heights fading away imperceptibly into the dim distant horizon. A breezy, bracing drive it was, the light buoyant air making us feel like the British soldier—fit to go anywhere and do anything. By degrees our way led us gently downwards into a softer, more fertile land: trees began to appear, stunted ones at first, gnarled and storm-bent, struggling bravely to exist in the midst of their unpromising surroundings;

as we descended these grew stronger, more upright, and more plentiful, till at last the road led us through a charmingly wooded glen; a great change from the early treeless portion of our stage. This delightful leafy retreat pleased us much: down it strayed a pebbly rivulet gently rippling on its fern-fringed way; wild flowers, too, abounded in this secluded vale, and many birds made it gladsome with their songs: it was a spot to be remembered—one to rejoice the heart of the weary traveller. Long we lingered there, breathing the sweet cool air, listening to the music of bird and river, to the many murmurings of the wind-rustled leaves, in a delightful dreamy do-nothing state.

As we proceeded thence the landscape opened out; it grew bleak and desolate once more; forsaken-looking mines, with shapeless masses of *débris* round about did not add to its cheerfulness; then suddenly we found ourselves in the little stagnant town of South Molton. The inn there was all bustle and confusion when we arrived; a general cleaning was in progress, and, however desirable a proceeding, not one to add to the comfort of visitors. But the landlady reassured us by saying, 'Things would be all straight soon;' so we decided to take a stroll round the sleepy little place, and upon returning found the rooms somewhat more orderly. There is not much to see in South Molton; the houses are practical, unromantic, the shops useful, uninteresting. The old church would probably have well repaid a visit; such ancient edifices are nearly always worthy of inspection; their walls are histories, 'sermons in stones,' their venerable monuments tell of a past people and a bygone age. But it was getting late and dark, and by the time we had discovered the

guardian of the keys (always 'not at home' when wanted), nothing of the interior would have been visible.

Some odd volumes of books we discovered in our room, and sundry curious prints on the walls, served to while away the evening. The old productions of a pre-chromo and pre-oleographic age, that still adorn so many of our rural inns, were a never-failing matter of wonderment to us. Highly coloured prints are they, with puzzling perspective and eccentric drawing, enough altogether to drive a well-ordered artist wild; the sort of things he might conceive in a nightmare or in a fit of *delirium tremens*—certainly not when in a sober state of mind. Yet, despite their many faults—and serious though these are—they possess an indisputable vigour: the horses look like going, the old-fashioned mail coaches are moving apace, figures and animals both are spirited: and I am fain to confess that to me these qualities cover a multitude of other faults. Rough and ready, crude and terribly out of drawing though most of these things are, and in spite of all that I have said against them, I still have the bad taste to prefer such productions to the insipid chromos or wonderful oleographs that have superseded them. One thing there is—they have a certain feeling, they do not look mechanical nor laboured, above all they do not profess to be high art. Perhaps, too, one reason for my tender regard for them is their bright colours; these, though crude in the extreme, help to enliven a gloomy room such as one sometimes finds at little wayside hostels; and, viewed at a distance, their failings are much toned down, though the spirit still is there. Association also may have something to do with my secret liking for

such bad work. I have in my mind now as I write more than one country hostelrie whose walls are decorated with these old-fashioned prints, hostelries wherein we have spent altogether very many pleasant hours; there are worse places in the world to tarry in for a while than one of these old-time inns. Once they were plentiful throughout the land, now their numbers are comparatively few; still in out-of-the-way places they linger yet—more, probably, than anyone who has not travelled by road would imagine. I know of few things more delightful in this bustling age than to arrive pleasantly fatigued at the end of a long day's journey at one of these tranquil antique hostels, with their grey weather-stained walls, high-pitched gables, quaint signs, and picturesque porches—porches covered perchance with honeysuckles and other creepers, the very poetry of the everyday life of an age departed.

Out of Molton our road was a pleasant one, evidently traversing a sparsely populated country; green fields and leafy trees met our sight in every direction, the softer scenery near at hand being emphasised by the woodless moorlands that bounded the prospect. We saw but few habitations and met no one during the whole of our morning's stage save a decrepit and deaf stone-breaker, who in reply to our query, 'How far it was to the next town or village,' said 'Yes, it wur a fine day;' and upon our repeating our question further made reply, 'It wur hard work stone-breaking.' 'Dry work, too, is it not?' we ventured to remark. For some special cause, his hearing suddenly seemed to improve, for he answered us at once, and, moreover, his words were to the point, 'Yes,' emphatically, 'precious dry work; I 'a done a'most everything in my time, but this

beats all jobs for dryness, that it do; I should be right glad to drink your health.' So we gave the poor old man a trifle, which gladdened his heart and wonderfully improved his hearing. Deafness, it would appear, is sometimes curable.

Beautiful though the country was through which we passed, the drive would have been pleasanter had it been a little more varied—in truth the endless succession of fields, trees, and hedges—fields, trees, and hedges—became in time a little wearisome. Lover of the country though I am, I must confess that a little ugliness even would have been an agreeable change, just to break the level monotony; still it was a monotony of beauty, and of that one has hardly a right to complain. Indeed when at rare times the scenery has become thus monotonous—or rather should I say less interesting than usual?—we found the mere fact of driving to be of itself a pleasure; even as fishing is more agreeable in a picturesque country than the reverse; yet neither fishing nor driving depends wholly on the scenery for its enjoyment. So we were always contented and happy, satisfied with the good things the gods provided, nor ungratefully grumbling when these were for a time withheld. In truth a stretch of comparatively dull country acts but as a foil to enhance the beauties that always follow in due course, and when these come upon the traveller with all their freshness they are well worth the compulsory waiting for, the inevitable longing after. Change is ever beneficial, contrasts refresh the sight, diversity quickens the mind. How indescribable is the pleasure of a drive on a fine summer day through a pretty country, in an open phaeton, behind a pair of fresh willing

horses! for a sluggish steed is unendurable; the journeying rapidly through space is of itself a delicious sensation. The cheerful companionable clatter of the horses' hoofs, the rhythmic rattling of the pole-chains, the measured musical jingling of the harness, the continued soft crunching sounds of the wheels on the road, the steady soothing swing of the phaeton (no other carriage, by the way, rides so easily or with so agreeable a motion)—all combine with the pleasant pace, not too fast to miss anything nor too slow to be wearisome, to make a driving tour like ours something to be enjoyed, even irrespective of scenery. Then what a perfect vehicle a phaeton is for road work! roomy enough for a sufficiency of luggage during a lengthened excursion, yet not over-heavy for hilly countries; there is no unnecessary material about it; it is compact, useful, handy; strong yet light-running —essentially a workmanlike turn-out.

Riding in a phaeton there is nothing in front of one to block the prospect, it affords a clear view ahead and around; your neck does not ache by having to turn to the right or left ever and again to observe the view, and then at that only an unsatisfactory side one. Who would drive or be driven in any other kind of carriage on a pleasure jaunt when a phaeton exists? It is the ideal conveyance for road work, having the supreme quality of being specially suited to its purpose.

As I have remarked, though very beautiful, we found the scenery a trifle monotonous. Why did it thus disappoint us, and so much suggest sameness? This was the question we asked ourselves, and found it not an easy one to answer. I think one cause

of our discontent was the regular and numberless subdivisions of the land by hedgerows—divisions mechanically repeated. The idea of space was by this means destroyed; the eye, seeking for a resting spot, was arrested everywhere by straight stiff lines from which it could in no way escape; broad effects were wanting; it was a contracted, and, if I may use the term, a cooped-up landscape—a landscape in parts, wanting wholeness. Perhaps it was the contrast to the many glorious uninterrupted moorland prospects we had been accustomed to of late that made us feel this; our eyes longed for a wider horizon, and fretted at being confined within boundaries.

But it was only the first portion of our way that gave us these feelings; towards the end of our day's stage matters improved wonderfully—the scenery became as romantic and beautiful as artist or poet could desire. At one spot without any warning we came to a long descent, which led us down into a slumberous wooded valley, musical with a voiceful river and filled with the hushful murmurings of many things: the hum of wandering bees, the twittering of birds, the gentle whispering of winds through forest trees, the rustling of waving bracken, and the numerous other rest giving sounds that break so gratefully the rural silence. Not the least pleasing of these were the solemn caw of rooks and the soothing melodious splash of a hidden stream. How opposed to town noises are country sounds! Then at the bottom of this charmed vale we came upon a little hamlet with lowly cottages here and there peeping out of a wealth of foliage—a remote spot, 'the world forgetting, by the world forgot.' Here we crossed the gleaming rippling river upon a picturesque

stone bridge, an antique piece of architecture grey with age, beneath whose solid moss-grown arches the clear crystal waters rushed with a steady onward current, glistening in the sun like molten silver and gold. There is to me a certain fascination in watching the ceaseless flow and in listening to the lulling musical gurgling of a river. Here it ripples laughingly over a pebbly shallow, there it circles and swirls in playful eddies, anon it bubbles and foams as it frettingly chafes its way against many an opposing boulder; escaping these it again flows on exultingly in a swift smooth current seaward never to return. Surely this was a fish-filled river, but we saw no angler; it was a scene to drive a painter wild, but we beheld no artist; the birds were singing from brake and tree right merrily, but there was no one to hear them; the air was filled with a mingling of sweetest odours of fragrant herbs and aromatic woods, but there was none to breathe it; ferns and wild flowers were abounding, but there was no hand to gather them; a peace as of Paradise was over all, and not a single weary soul to feel its balmy restfulness! We had all this lone loveliness to ourselves!

All unexpectedly we had come across a secluded beauty-spot, a perfect picture, eye-delighting and heart-gladdening, more like a bit cut out of a painting than a stern reality. Still such spots do exist in favoured England, but they are only revealed to the fortunate wanderer by road. Privileged mortal he! A pity it is that people do not know more of the enchanting scenes that lie hidden away in many an odd nook and corner of their birthland, gems of scenery unheeded, uncared for, unperceived save by a chance wayfarer.

Nature is a coy maiden, somewhat shy: she does not brazen-facedly proclaim her beauties, rather she delights in hiding such; the choicer her works the more she rejoices in secreting them. She places her most perfect gems in sequestered spots, away from the vulgar gaze, as though afraid of making them too public and having them spoilt. That which is to one looking from a distance only a wooded valley, with a little stream wandering down it, is to another a world of beauty, suggesting all manner of delightful things; for he knows Nature's innermost secrets, the wealth of loveliness that lies hidden there.

In the course of a day's drive taken at random almost anywhere in rural England, it is astonishing how many beauty-spots there are to be discovered by those who have eyes to see, and know where to look for them. These may perchance lie a short distance from the road. For instance, you may be crossing an old stone bridge, beneath which flows a little stream half hidden by the wooded banks on either side. The spot would possibly arrest the attention of a traveller that way as being rather pretty, and probably he would, after a passing glance, proceed on his way and think no more about the matter; but the artist, or real lover of Nature, would almost instinctively feel that were he to descend to the bed of the river and look upward towards the old bridge, having that in the prospect, he would have a pretty picture before him. I well remember one day whilst driving along what appeared to be a somewhat uninteresting road, with nothing particular to note *en route*, I passed over much such an old bridge as before described, observing at some distance, down through the trees, the white gleam of an artist's

umbrella. Tempted by the sight I descended, and scrambled along the banks of the stream to see what he was painting. My scramble brought me to a most romantic little glen, a delightfully secluded out-of-the-world spot; hidden away in this was a charmingly picturesque old mill, an ancient structure, weather-stained, with gabled roof bent with age, on which tufts of grasses, weeds, and yellow mosses had made their home. The ancient wheel, green and grey, was revolving slowly round, still doing useful work, humming and droning as it turned; the mill was backed by leafy woods, and the bright sparkling of the water dropping downwards from it enlivened the picture. I felt compelled to make a sketch of this, which is engraved in a former work. Doubtless there are hundreds of people (unless a happy chance or business took them there) who have passed and repassed along that road, and who know nothing whatever of the existence of that charming little rock-inclosed tree-girt glen, with its picturesque weather-beaten mill. The painting of it that I observed the artist beginning I afterwards saw in its completed state, and at once recognised an old friend; it was in a fine gallery, and was one of the most admired and valued works there.

Speaking of these beauty-spots that of one kind or another abound so throughout the land, it is strange how some artists—not, perhaps, those of the highest order, but those whose pictures always appear to please and meet with a ready sale—seem to fall in love with a certain locality, and to go on painting in it year after year. I know a little village in Wales (not a tourist-haunted one), a romantic spot, very dear to me, near to which flows a delightful little river, which

gambols and frets along its rocky bed in fine style, as only a Welsh river can. An artist I chanced to meet there, of local fame, never seems to leave this stream for his subjects or to weary of it. 'There is in four or five miles of it "stuff" enough,' he remarked to me, 'to last my life—or two if I possessed them.' I could hardly credit his statement, and boldly told him so; upon which he asked me to pay him a visit at his studio, and judge for myself whether he was correct or not in his assertion. This I did, and inspected numerous sketches and studies for pictures he had made from that much-painted river. The number he showed me was certainly great; the views were taken under all kinds of effects—sunrises, sunsets, grey-gloom and midday glory, in winter and summer, in storm and calm; now after a spate showing the water foaming angrily along in white seething masses, overleaping in its fury and haste the many boulders that impeded its course; now in a deep tranquillity, with cattle standing lazily in it, and hardly a ripple to disturb its glassy surface; now all aglow with the sunset's golden tints; again of a leaden hue under a cold grey brooding sky; and still again of a silvery brightness upon a peaceful summer's morning, and so forth in a seemingly endless variety—till at last I began to understand how, even in the same valley, in spots close together, Nature never repeats herself; every hour of the day she gives a different effect; for she is inexhaustible. Not that I think it wise of any artist thus to repeat himself. I must confess life to me would be a very humdrum affair were I compelled everlastingly to paint in one prescribed spot, however romantic or beautiful it might be; but *chacun à son goût*. Besides, had not

our artist his living to get and a family to maintain? and having discovered the public taste, perhaps he was worldly-wise in holding to a certainty.

Painting for money may be to some a necessity, but it would be well for art if the artist could labour for love only, without having to think what he should receive for his work—to paint for a deathless name rather than for gold.

We ended our day's pilgrimage at Bampton, a pleasantly situated spot, set in the midst of wooded hills and surrounded by a sweet pastoral country. Bampton by courtesy, I presume, is called a town; in truth it is more of an overgrown village, with indifferent shops and houses, the perfection of plainness; yet withal the place pleased us, just because it was so rural, so natural, and free from all pretence. What though the shops were few and poor? doubtless they served all the needs of the inhabitants, therefore they fulfilled their purpose; they could not do more were they palaces. Truly these shops boasted not of plate glass and handsome fronts, they did not remind us of a town shop stuck down in the country, as many such local structures do when aiming to be ambitious, and in consequence impress one as being sadly out of harmony with their surroundings, almost as much so as a tall hat and a frock-coat would be to a pedestrian when tramping over the moors or upon the mountains. A tree in London may recall to the observer pastoral scenes far away. Well and good. But one does not care to have London brought down to him second-hand in the country. Our old towns, once so individual, each possessing its own special features, are getting, alas! terribly alike, as one ancient house after another in



AN OLD MILL.

them gets 'improved,' or is wholly rebuilt, to the pride of its owner, in the latest city fashion. If this improving mania keeps going on at the rate it has done hitherto, these rural towns will all be more like transplanted bits of London than their own original selves. The hotels in these places, often quaintly picturesque, have fortunately, as a rule, successfully resisted the new order of things. Nearly always they are well built, carefully planned, convenient, and of ample proportion; their business has diminished seriously since the good old coaching times, when they were in the height of their prosperity; they do not therefore require extension, and so of all the ancient picturesque buildings they will probably be the last to disappear. An old English country town without its ancient posting and coaching inn, appears to me as incomplete as a village would be without its time-honoured fane.

From Bampton to Wiveliscombe was a pleasant stage; the country still had the appearance of being scantily populated. Our way led us through a well-wooded stream agreeably interspersed with richly cultivated vales and deep dark glens. The road was rough, but the scenery was very beautiful. Wiveliscombe, where we baited our horses, is a slumberous sort of place, but it boasted of two inns as old-fashioned as the town itself. How hostelries manage to exist at all in such dreamy remote spots is a problem I have never yet been able to solve. Our inn had a deserted, forlorn look; we were the only visitors there; and it seemed to us it might be long before any others made their appearance: for all this we fared well, better far than we had often done at more pretentious

ones. Out of Wiveliscombe we had an excellent smooth level road, which lasted all the way to Taunton. We passed through Milverton *en route*, a charming village with comfortable-looking livable homes, garden-surrounded—who would abide contentedly in the country without a garden?—possessing also a fine old church, so we judged at least from a passing glance.

Taunton is a very clean town, prosperous as well it seemed to us, a bright cheerful place; but we had become spoilt for town life: in spite of its pleasantness it pleased us not. Our hotel there—how sadly it contrasted with the little rural hostelries we had been accustomed to for so long, and which we had always found so exceedingly comfortable! In place of a civil obliging maid we had a morose inattentive waiter, clothed in a suit of seedy black, as though he were a funeral mute; nor did the fare compare well with that of the less pretentious hostels: truth to tell, we missed our hitherto never-failing Devonshire cream, our simple but abundantly supplied and well-cooked meals, the delightful chats with our host and hostess, and the general friendly homely feeling of the country inns.

It was market-day when we left Taunton, and we met on our road numbers of ruddy ale-loving farmers, jovial-looking in spite of the proverbially hard times, besides cattle, horses, and sheep, all proceeding one way—not ours. We had never seen a rural road so abounding with life since our journey had begun; indeed, so forsaken as a rule are the old highways and by-ways, erst so thronged, that we came to the conclusion that they were about the loneliest places in Great Britain.

The country we passed through that day was a

pleasant one, though not particularly remarkable nor calling for comment. The only thing that specially arrested our attention was a little village with a large and exceedingly fine old church, a cathedral town in miniature. At any other time we should most certainly have stopped to inspect this ancient ecclesiastical edifice, but were we not that day bound for Glastonbury? and did not an intense longing take possession of us to see its old historic abbey? So even in spite of the temptation, and great though it was, we speeded on, nor halted till we arrived at busy Bridgewater. There we rested for a couple of hours to bait our horses and refresh ourselves. Bridgewater struck us as being a very un-English sort of town; exactly why it gave us this impression I cannot say; but so it did—such feelings are not to be analysed. Has not somebody happily termed Amsterdam a vulgar Venice? Descending lower still in the scale I should call Bridgewater a vulgar Amsterdam, which comparison may not be patriotic, nor please Bridgewaterites, but still I feel it is a just one. However, it is rather hard to pass judgment upon a town on an hour's acquaintance with it; moreover, it was raining when we were there, and wet roads below, and leaden rain-charged clouds above, do not tend to make a place look more lively or prepossessing.

Bridgewater, it may be here noticed, is famous for its manufacture of Bath bricks; this is a speciality of the town. 'It is the only place in the world where these articles are made. They are formed of a peculiar mixture of sand and clay, which the flood- and ebb-tide deposit upon the river shore. The sediment having been removed, it is consolidated by drying, and

cut into oblong masses, which are as well known as Bath bricks in China as in England, in Damascus as in London ; but why so called it is difficult to say.'

During the afternoon bits of blue sky showed themselves, a suspicion of sunshine filtered through the moist atmosphere, upon which agreeable change we at once ordered the horses to, and were soon once more proceeding on our way, rattling along the bustling streets to the fresh free open country. How clear was the air, and how refreshed all things seemed after the rain! how near the distance! the wet had brought out all the colours of the landscape; there was a plentiful supply of clouds about, and these caused a delightful play of light and shade everywhere. The country, in my opinion, never looks more beautiful than just after the clearing up of a storm ; the atmosphere is washed of all impurities, there is no heat haze to interfere with the prospect, and all growing things seem revived and to rejoice in renewed vigour; the birds, too, how gladsome then they are, singing their sweetest songs! All nature appears bright and joyous, as though new-born.

I have tried, but have never yet been able to comprehend the beauty many people profess to find in a clear blue cloudless sky; to me it is intolerable, a meaningless vacuity—space, nothing but space—space and sameness. Clouds are the natural inhabitants of the sky, as much so as human beings of the earth; they give interest, variety, and character to it; to my mind the serenest blue that ever shone upon fair Italy is not to be compared to an English summer sky, with its soft blue voids and violet-tinted changeful clouds. The scenery of cloud-land is as beautiful as that of the

earth, and even more varied, full of sentiment and individuality, of peace and gentleness, of unrest and power as well, tenderly lovely at times, often grand and impressive; not seldom, as at sunset, glowing with gold and opal-hued; at evening sober grey; but glorious or solemn, at war or at peace, always expressive. What has a blue void to offer in exchange for all this varying beauty? Give me our English cloud-decked skies; even if we have to pay the price for them of sundry wet days, they are well worth the cost. Clear blue Italian skies should be reserved for poets only; in reality they are a wearying monotony, a changeless nothingness, with a glaring ball of fire in the midst unsoftened in its dazzling light, rising, shining, setting—that is all. Seldom or never are our British skies thus monotonous; the worst days we have are those when a dull heavy leaden mass of low-lying vapour lies uniformly over all; but these are luckily not frequent. I am of course speaking of country skies, not of town sulphur-and-smoke-laden, fog-hidden ones. It is true that there is a brightness and a clearness in the atmosphere of continental spas unknown in London; but it is equally true that in the English country, away from smoky towns, the air is bright, and clear, and fresh. People who are so fond of extolling continental joys, and brilliant weather, seem always to look upon but one side of the picture, and fondly to imagine that the English landscape lies under a perpetual gloom. Three months of driving through England would possibly dispel such mistaken ideas; we, at any rate, have always brought back with us from our outings bright and sunny memories—memories of sunshiny days, days tempered certainly with moving vapours and

pleasant airs, but I prefer the sunshine softened thus, to the glaring light and scorching heat of more southern lands. A genial life-giving climate is that of England, in spite of all its detractors have said against it. I have always had a secret admiration for that thoroughly English, if somewhat impious, old fox-hunting squire who, when upon his death-bed, exclaimed to his clergyman, who said he had come to speak to him of a better land, 'Old England is good enough for me; I don't want a better one.'

Our road led us along the crest of the Polden Hills, whence we had an extensive and panoramic prospect of gloomy Sedgemoor, famous as being the scene of the last battle fought on English ground. It is a dark-looking, melancholy region, cheerless in spite of the warm sunshine, as though the spirit of the past brooded over it, and as though it still were in mourning for the many brave men, friend and foe, who slumber now side by side beneath its black funereal soil. This moor takes its name from the thick growth of common sedge; the peat formed by this being in places as much as a dozen feet in depth; this has been cut and used as fuel ever since the Roman times.

Beautiful as was our way, it seemed to us a long one; we were eager to reach Glastonbury, and now we were so near to the object of our desires, our longings increased with each mile of the road traversed. However, our day's pilgrimage was finished at last, and as the light was fading, and the tranquil gloaming stole quietly over the land, we arrived at our destination. Driving round past the abbey's boundary walls, past the old monks' kitchen (the only part not in ruins), the road then took a turn, and we found ourselves

in the heart of the peaceful little town: and what a picture was before us! surely the most romantic-looking hostelrie in Britain—The George, or Pilgrim's Inn, to wit—a tender romance, a wordless history, a touching poem writ in stone. Oh, if those walls had but lips to speak! It was a sight to send a thrill of delight through the heart of an artist, antiquary, or lover of the England of long ago, so endeared to all her loyal sons, so great, and grand, and glorious, so world-feared and world-renowned; a delightful relic of ancient times that has had the supreme good fortune to escape the spoiler's hands, an offshoot of the grand old abbey, a house wherein footsore pilgrims used to be lodged and entertained without charge and dismissed with a blessing.

Times have strangely changed since this chaste pile was first erected by the pious monks to accommodate the ever-increasing hordes of worshippers to the abbey's once famous shrine. Now, in this nineteenth century, it opens still its doors to receive its guests, who yet flock to the once hallowed fane, wherein they find, as in the days gone by, good fare and entertainment, though not without price; and so it opened its doors to receive us latter-day pilgrims—not so devout as those of old, I fear, but sincere pilgrims notwithstanding.

As we drove under the hoary, weather-worn, and time-stained crumbling archway into the solemn, silent, old-world building — a building with the bloom of centuries upon it, and one whose every stone seems to be fraught with historic memories—we felt somehow as we passed within its portals as though Time had reversed his wheel, and we had by some strange

magic been conveyed back into the Middle Ages. We slept in one of the old, old chambers, a chamber with heavy mullioned stone windows and leaded lattice lights, picturesque and gloomy, a ghostly interior, dimly lighted, full of mysterious shadows and indistinct forms—a haunted room if ever there were such; and had the spirit of one of the portly departed monks noiselessly walked in, I verily believe the circumstance would not have greatly surprised us; nay, we almost expected to see one. In this very room doubtless many a weary pilgrim, now asleep for ever, had rested before us; but in spite of our antique surroundings we slumbered soundly, for were we not also pilgrims, and were we not weary too?

CHAPTER XVIII.

An historical Hostelrie—Old-World Legends—A strange Ending to a Sale—Glastonbury Abbey—Monks and Miracles—A marvellous Tree—King Arthur's traditional Tomb—The Monastic Life of Old—Tor Hill—'The Island Valley of Avilion'—Wells—A romantic Town—Scenery ideal and real—The Mendips—Caverns—An Underground World—The Witch of Wokey Hole—Cheddar Cliffs—Living Rocks—A dull Watering-Place—A Puzzle—The Sea-Serpent—Clevedon—Clifton—Bristol—Bath Box Hill—'A Land of Milk and Honey'—An old Coaching Town—Past Days—A kind-hearted Doctor.

You might travel far and long in many lands before you came across a more romantic, historically interesting, quainter, or more beautiful hostel—in an artist's point of view—than The George at Glastonbury; it is rather a picture than a building. Let us take a brief glance at the storied past of this grey old pile, whose very stones are histories. It was, as I have before remarked, built by the monks to accommodate the crowds of visitors to the far-famed abbey's shrine, the numbers being too great to be housed within the monastic walls. The general idea of the exterior of this antique edifice may be better gathered from the sketch of it I have given[1] than from pages of description. Exactly how many years this structure has existed it is now impossible to say, for we have no definite information on the point; suffice it to know that it is centuries old. We find by an old record that one

[1] See Frontispiece.

John Selwode, who was abbot in 1457, gave it to the chamberlain of the abbey; so that, at any rate, we may fairly consider it to be over four hundred years old: therefore it is of venerable antiquity. How many changes has it not seen—how many more may it yet outlive! for its walls are strong and stable yet, and in these days things change more rapidly than in the past, and there is no fixity of the future; now-a-days things are attacked just because they are established, and there is a restless uneasiness to experiment with the novel and untried. The age is full of change, an age it is of pulling down rather than of building up. Old England is passing away, a new England is taking the place of the old: will the new be a happier land, a better one to dwell in? I fear to answer the question: let us hope it will.

Just over the entrance arch of The George are three carved stone shields, two of which contain armorial bearings: the first, those of the abbey; the second, those of Edward IV.; the third shield, curiously enough, has had all its carvings carefully chiselled away. Why has this been done? On this matter history is strangely silent; tradition is also the same—a wonderful thing, for Tradition is generally very busy with her tongue when history is wanting. The most reasonable supposition appears to be that probably the third shield contained the white rose of York, and upon the death of Richard III., the Lancaster line becoming the ruling one, the authorities of the time deemed it advisable to obliterate the insignia of a deposed race. However, this is mere conjecture, and given only, facts being unobtainable, as a plausible theory.

Beneath the building is a darksome cellar in which

are a curious stone seat, and a flowing well once held in high repute for miraculous cures; besides other vaults and secret passages: one of these passages is supposed to have given private access to the abbey. Concerning all of these, legends abound more or less startling.

Old as is The George Inn, there existed 'within the memory of the oldest inhabitant' a still more ancient building, devoted in monastic days to the same purpose as was The George; this unique and highly interesting edifice was most unfortunately allowed to go to utter decay instead of being carefully preserved for the benefit of future generations. A rather remarkable coincidence is recorded in connection with this structure. A few years before its final destruction and conversion into ordinary building materials it was offered for sale; the auctioneer and a large party were occupying a chamber on the first floor; the last bid having been made, and just as the well-known words, 'Going, going, *gone*,' had been uttered, the ancient floor suddenly gave way, and the whole party were precipitated into the room below, fortunately without hurt.

Early next morning we made a pilgrimage to the abbey. We had the ruins all to ourselves; there were no tourists, sightseers, or cheap-trippers there; we were able to wander about whither we would, undisturbed, unmolested; and supremely grateful were we for the great blessing of being left alone. There were no discordant sounds to break the train of our meditations or to destroy the solemn harmony of our surroundings. The crumbling ivy-clad ruins of the erst stately pile are now roofed alone by the sky above and paved beneath by the humble grass. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* Silent, desolate, and forsaken were the ruins we saw

there, save for a colony of noisy rooks who held profane matins on their own account. And as we gazed upon the relics of departed greatness we could not but feel the mutability of even the grandest things of earth.

> We build with what we deem eternal rock :
> The distant eye asks where the fabric stood.

Where are now the lordly mitred abbots, the cowled monks, and the many pilgrims who of old so devoutly knelt before the once sacred shrine? Gone to their rest long ages ago, priest and worshipper, saint or sinner, they sleep alike their last long sleep, their resting spots are all moss- and grass-grown, unheeded, unnoted, and unknown.

Standing there alone we tried to picture to ourselves the desecrated edifice as it was in the glory of its prime and consummate majesty—with soaring roof and jewelled altar, with rarely tinted glass and sculptured forms of quaint device, with gilded choir, dim aisles, richly decorated chapels, and all the wealth of the gathered art of centuries. Oh, the ecstasy of Gothic architecture! What a mighty living faith must they have held who raised such a miracle in stone! We felt sentimentally inclined; in our minds we recreated and remonked this gorgeous stately fane. In a delightful day-dream before us :

> A visionary band arose,
> 'Mid solemn music's thrilling swell and close,
> A silent shadowy train; the taper's gleam
> Fitfully o'er monastic forms was shed,
> O'er mitred abbot, and the lengthened line
> Of dark-cowled monks that bent around the shrine
> Still, calm, and voiceless as the slumb'ring dead.
> They passed away—that strange and solemn train :

The pealing music murmured through the trees,
Breathing its faint farewell upon the breeze,
And to its distant home returned again.
They passed away. The sunbeams brightly shone,
And o'er us smiled the cloudless, azure sky,
Where late the fretted roof's proud canopy
Rose o'er the torch-lit crowd. We were alone:
Where late the golden censers high had flung
Their fragrant clouds around the imaged throne!

This abbey was in the past pre-eminent for its vast wealth, and for the sanctity of its relics. It was raised upon the spot where first the Christian religion was preached in Britain, preached within half a century of the Crucifixion, the spot whereon the first church in our island was built, constructed of woven boughs!

Surely this is hallowed ground! Was it not here, according to tradition, that Joseph of Arimathæa, weary with his wanderings, planted his staff, which thereupon took root, and, if we may place faith in monkish legends, blossomed ever afterward upon each succeeding Christmas Day? Respecting this thorn we came across a dweller in the town whose forefathers, he told us, had preserved a cutting of it, when it was ruthlessly rooted up at the time of the civil wars by some fanatic Puritans; and he assured us that the descendant of the original tree still blossoms regularly about Christmas time. In looking over Hone's 'Every-day Book,' vol. ii. December 24, I came across the following extract, which may be interesting: 'On Christmas Eve (new style), 1753, a vast concourse of people attended the noted thorn, but, to their great disappointment, there was no appearance of its blowing, which made them watch it narrowly the 5th of January, the Christmas Day (old style), when it blowed as usual.—*London*

Evening Post.' Strangely enough, during the following winter, the letter which I have copied below appeared in the 'Standard:'

THE GLASTONBURY THORN.

To the Editor of 'The Standard.'

SIR,—I believe there was some discussion a year ago with reference to the 'Glastonbury thorn.' For the benefit and conviction of those who doubt the existence of this curious species of thorn I herewith send you some sprays, cut this day from a tree growing close to the ruins of the abbey, which are just coming into blossom.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES AUSTIN.

Glastonbury Abbey, Somerset: December 25.

But to return to the ruins. These, alas! to use an Irishman's expression, are very much ruined; fortunately the most interesting portion, namely, St. Joseph's Chapel, is the best preserved; this is supposed by the best authorities to have been raised upon the site of the before-mentioned church of boughs.

It was at Glastonbury that St. Patrick rested after his wanderings in Ireland, and here, also, blessed King Arthur is said to have been buried. Even in the early days of almost boundless faith, disputes arose as to this fact, to settle which the ruling abbot, in the reign of Richard I., ordered his traditional tomb to be opened, when, if we may believe the monks, a large coffin hollowed out of a gigantic oak was discovered, with the bones of a large man within, and by his side those of a woman, presumed to be the remains of Queen Guinevere, and in the coffin also a rudely lettered leaden cross inscribed, 'Here, in the island of Avalonia, lies buried the body of the renowned King

Arthur.' Whether there was any truth in the story, or how much, or whether it was wholly a pious fraud of the monks, must ever now remain a mystery.

It should be remembered that in those days there was a keen competition for relics, and the abbey that could boast the greatest number of the most rare of these flourished the most. Indeed, disputes between the abbots of Glastonbury and those of rival institutions, as to the right of possession and genuineness of relics, were constant, so much so as to cause a public scandal; the never-ending disputes were settled eventually in a manner doubtless abbots and monks little dreamed of, namely, by the dissolution of the monasteries. Before this happened, however, to such an extent had the recriminations grown that we find one of the archbishops of Canterbury writing to the effect that, 'if they verily possessed certain relics, they must have been stolen; otherwise the monks were swindlers, professing to hold what they had not; but either swindlers or thieves they must be!' Pretty language this between those with whom brotherly love alone was supposed to exist!

Glastonbury also possessed a wonderful walnut tree, healing springs, and many other marvellous things, the list of which it would be long and tedious to write. Some idea of the former magnificence of the old abbey may be gathered from the fact that its walls inclosed sixty acres, at the abbot's table 'five hundred persons were even entertained,' and his richly stored library was one of the largest and most valued in the kingdom. How sadly its present mournfulness contrasts with its past glories! It speaks of a work completed, a labour ended; touching in its desolation, its hoary crumbling

ruins raise in the onlooker a feeling of compassion, and stir up within him a chord of sympathy!

Whiting, the last abbot, for 'the very haught and rank treason' of concealing sundry plate and other vessels belonging to the monastery from the king's myrmidons, was accused of the heinous crime of robbing his own church!—and this from legal thieves! For this unpardonable offence, he was tried and condemned to death; and on November 15, 1539, he was drawn upon a hurdle, as though he were a depraved criminal, up to the top of the Tor Hill, overlooking his beloved abbey, that for long years he had ruled so well, and was hung between two of his monks, his body afterwards being cut into quarters and sent to Bath, Bridgewater, Ilchester, and Wells, his grey-haired head being stuck on a pole over the gateway of the monastery.

A propos of abbots and monks, we all know the words of a certain famous old song, but a couple of verses will well bear repeating:

Many have told of the monks of old
  What a saintly race they were;
But 'tis most true that a merrier crew
  Could scarce be found elsewhere:
    For they sung and laughed,
    And the rich wine quaffed,
And lived on the daintiest cheer.

And the abbot meek, with his form so sleek,
  Was the heartiest of them all,
And would take his place, with a smiling face,
  When refection bell would call:
    And they sung and laughed,
    And the rich wine quaffed,
Till they shook the olden wall.

It has been, unfortunately for the truth, an almost universally accepted fact, and one stubbornly maintained by writers both in prose and verse, that the olden monks were a mere set of lazy drones; a jovial, useless crew, of no service whatever to the world, lovers of good living and good cheer, pretending to virtues they never practised, doing nothing themselves but living upon the industry and superstition of others. This is altogether a wrong conception; and as falsehood can never do good to any cause, it is as well to be just and recall actual facts. In the first place, lazy the monks were not, no body or bodies worked harder in all England than they. They gardened and farmed well, were capital shepherds, brewers of excellent ale, and no mean vintagers; for wine was made in the England of the past from home-grown grapes, and good wine, too, as it could be now were we as industrious and skilful as they. I have tasted wine thus made in recent years, and can testify that, though inferior to high class foreign productions, it is vastly superior to the cheap and trashy made-up wines that come from abroad. Artists also were the monks, architects of rare merit besides, and the careful custodians of whatever learning there was. They spent money upon and helped to erect works of practical usefulness, such as bridges and roads, many of which remain to this day, and prove the strength and excellence of their workmanship.

The monasteries, it must not be forgotten, afforded the only refuge to the persecuted in those times of oppression, when might alone was right; they were the sole protectors of the weak and friendless against the strong, the sole defenders of the poor against the rich.

We have listened too often and too long to the tales and calumnies of the enemies of the monks, accepting such without question or reason; they have had few or no apologists save amongst Catholics.

The monks did good work in their time at the dissolution of the monasteries. Many nobly perished for their faith; truly many of the weaker brethren's hearts failed them under cruel persecutions and cowardly threats, as the hearts of stronger men might well have done placed in like circumstances; but that does not take away from the self-denying martyrdom of the many.

Great and noble buildings must have been designed by great and noble men; none but such could have planned and raised our old cathedrals, abbeys, and churches: wonders truly are they in stone, miracles of beauty, poems in architecture. Alas! that so many of these fine structures should have been so ruthlessly overthrown, and so much art work lost to the world for ever. The Goths, who destroyed them, could not raise up anything half so worthy of admiration. The world has never seen such revelations of architectural art before, and never will again—such combined piety and love of the beautiful. The faith that raised those glorious old fanes is not, alas! of our time. The mighty faith of old—simple, childlike, call it superstitious if you will—brought forth sublime works. Our matter-of-fact, faithless age, what has it brought forth to compare with these? In respect of beauty, of course I mean; ugliness enough it has and to spare—ugliness in the shape of gigantic hotels, huge railway *termini*, prison-like manufactories, unlovely towns abounding in plate glass, stucco and pseudo-classic

houses, meaningless churches, and so-called grand buildings, whose only grandeur is their size. Truly not all the productions of our age are so devoid of beauty, so utterly commonplace, but the little good is hidden amidst a wilderness of all that is meretricious.

In the dark ages of oppression the monasteries were the sole homes of liberty and learning; they were the only spots where security and undisturbed rest could be had from the outer world. In them the hungry were clothed and fed, the friendless found a friend, the lowliest a refuge in their need : once within the abbey's sacred walls they were safe from harm, protected by the threats and penalties of the Church, launched fearlessly against those who would dare to cross her decrees; potent factors these in those days when agnostic teachings were unknown, and newspapers and reviews were still unborn.

Is it not time now that some one should say a good word for the much abused monks ? nay, should we not even be grateful to them for all the good they did, the liberty they upheld, the learning they maintained in evil times ? Greed of plunder, I take it, a lust for the easily acquired wealth of others, more than facts, raised and kept up most of the slanders against the monks; of course there was a certain amount of truth in some of the statements, but they were not all or wholly true :

> A lie that is only half a lie
> Is the hardest of all to fight.

Black sheep there were in the fold, and the good suffered for the bad.

It appears to me that it would be difficult to overrate the good done and valuable services rendered by

the monks both to humanity and civilisation in those olden days of darkness, lawlessness, and disorder. Were it not for them we might have been something different from what we now are—different, but hardly any better, I think. For my part, Protestant as I am, I gladly acknowledge the valuable services they rendered of old to mankind, in maintaining whatever there was of learning and liberty, boldly and fearlessly, in evil times. How it was that when a new era of liberty dawned these institutions, till then the home of freedom, should have been so conspicuous in their hostility to the new order of things, and have endeavoured to uphold rather the letter than the spirit of the Gospel, is an historical problem I do not feel called upon to discuss here.

In the evening we wandered to the top of the Tor Hill, which is curiously crowned by an old weather-beaten tower, the sole remains of a pilgrim chapel that once stood on this isolated height. It was a fair view we had of the silent world below ; a long level stretch of country bounded by the blue Mendip Hills, at our feet a rich luxuriant vale. Once possibly, nay, almost certainly, the far-extending level was covered by the sea ; we could easily even then imagine it thus, for the blue-grey evening mists had risen, and showed us the smiling valley of Avalon or Avilion, as Tennyson calls it, in its old island form, to which according to the Arthurian legend the sore beset and stricken king came on the mystic barge to be healed of his grievous wound. The sun set in blood that night, and rose next morning solemnly over a kingless land. The glory of England's chivalry, her ideal knight, was no more. Not even that fair valley—

Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow—
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea—

could restore her hero to life again.

The last glance of earth the poor abbot had must have been a beautiful one—passing fair the prospect appeared to us—the wood-embowered abbey lighted up by the lingering rays of the last sunbeams, and all the landscape beyond etherealised by the warm dreamy evening light, a scene seeming almost too *spirituel* for this stern prosaic world. It was well we saw it thus, for we felt that we stood upon historic ground; were we not, besides, in a land of legend and old romance? a land in which fact and fable are delightfully blended, so blended indeed that it is now almost impossible to say where one begins and the other ends.

How beautiful are these old abbeys, how mournfully yet with what dignity they stand! Beloved by artists, sung of by poets, the despair of architects, the glory of antiquaries, the delight of tourists, they gladden still the heart of the nineteenth-century pilgrim! Looking down upon those rugged time-rent walls, it is hard to realise now that once within them stood the richly bedecked high altar, all ablaze with many tapers, before which chanted sandalled monks and worshipped weary pilgrims; that the swelling anthem resounded through the arching aisles; that the grass-grown floor, once all inlaid, echoed to the stately abbot's tread; or that the hollow voids were filled with a glory of many-coloured glass, through which the golden sunshine shone lighting up with gorgeous tints the purple gloom. Now—

Pillar and roof and pavement all are gone,
The lamp extinguished and the prayers long done.

No more when the twilight gathers sounds the angelus to prayer; a bell is ringing truly, but it comes from the unromantic railway station, and now a whistle breaks upon our ears, and we observe passengers rushing to catch the train. What a contrast to the cloistered peace and rest of old!

A short drive the next morning brought us to Wells; though the inevitable railways have invaded the place, they fortunately appear to be unable to disturb its old-time tranquillity; it still impresses the world-weary traveller with a delicious feeling of restful calm.

Wells Cathedral is a gem amongst cathedrals; but space forbids my giving any detailed account of it, and, besides, is it not fully described in numberless guide books? and to these for further information I would refer my reader. The ancient city pleased us much; we had never seen or heard of its beauties before, so they took us totally by surprise; indeed, in my opinion, it is the most romantic and pleasantest town in all England, nor do I make this statement rashly or without forethought. It is perfectly situated at the foot of the wooded Mendips, its cathedral is happily placed; it is dignified, as a cathedral should be, yet it does not haughtily assert itself nor proclaim too pointedly its ecclesiastical supremacy; the houses of Wells are quaint and old, yet neat and clean; its market-place is a picture, the many and varied time-toned buildings group agreeably, and satisfy the eye; they harmonise also charmingly with each other; moreover wherever you go you have pleasant peeps of green around. Nor

must the moated walls of the bishop's palace be forgotten, leading the mind back to stormy times: these are most picturesque, weather-beaten, and rent with age, and ivy-clad as well. All these happy combinations go to form a city quite ideal, yet existing; a living city as picturesque as those highly visionary productions given in the landscape annuals of the years gone by. If only the realities were at all equal to the artists' conceptions, what a pleasant world this would be to live in! If we had only the power of turning fiction into fact; *if*—alas! how much there is in that little innocent-looking word! it has ruined lives, broken hearts, and upset empires.

From Wells we had a pleasant stage through a pleasant country skirting the whole of our way to the right; the foot of the fair green Mendips to the left of us was a far-extending region of marshland and moor, low lying, still a large portion of it was drained and cultivated; unprofitable farming it appeared to us; a rich green level, covered with long waving coarse grasses, with which the wind made waves like those upon the sea—land waves as well as ocean ones. Wild rather than beautiful it appeared to us, dreary even, though enlivened here and there by the glowing gold of the scented gorse—

> That bonnie wild flower,
> Whose blossoms so yellow, and branches so long,
> O'er moor and o'er rough rocky mountain are flung,
> Far away from trim garden and bower;

but in spite of its dreariness it has its admirers. Different people see the same scene with varying feelings; it would never do were we all to love the same thing. Does not the poet say of it that it is—

. . . The fairest plain
That British eye may see,
From Quantock to the Mendip range,
A broad expanse and free?

The Mendip range is an isolated mass of hills, rising from out the surrounding plains, and like the Derbyshire highlands composed of limestone. The glen and cliff scenery of the Mendips is very beautiful, and much resembles that of better known Matlock, Buxton, and Castleton. The limestone formation here is no exception to the rule; it abounds in caverns and abrupt cliffs, which have a very fine effect, and when enriched with thick woods are exceedingly lovely.

In one of these caverns some years ago were discovered large quantities of the bones of the cave lion and other wild beasts of the prehistoric age, showing what a wild country this nature-tamed and humanised England of ours must once have been.

Nothing is more remarkable about these limestone hills than the caverns, fissures, and passages they abound in and are honeycombed with; often in these latter (as in the case of the Axe) the rivers actually flow underground for a time. The Axe is supposed to flow in this manner for at least two miles before it sees the light of day—a sunless river. It is said indeed that a dog chasing a rabbit at Cheddar ran into a hole in the cliffs there, hitherto unperceived, being hidden by an entanglement of undergrowth, and that he eventually emerged at Wokey Hole, a somewhat famous cavern about six miles away from the spot where he first disappeared. This strange story may or may not be true; the fact is by no means impossible or even improbable.

This Wokey Hole was once—so tradition says—the abode of a wicked witch, whose evil doings were a terror to all the neighbourhood, but being anathematised by one of the Glastonbury monks she was turned into a stone; and a stone is still shown there pronounced to be the very one into which she was turned; and so, said our guide, the story must be true. We could not quite see the *sequitur*, but that is no matter; we did not come upon a driving tour to argue the truth or untruth of old-world legends; but the living faith in such, in this nineteenth-century England of ours, would astonish many who have not explored her delightful by-ways or searched out her odd folks hidden away in many a strange nook and corner.

Cheddar is a pleasing little town, famous almost equally for its cheeses, cliffs, and caverns; town I suppose I must call it, as so it terms itself, but village appears the more appropriate title. However, town or village, it is a very picturesque spot, set in the midst of great scenic attractions and marvels.

The entrance to the Cheddar cliffs is past a large pool of stilly water, with lowly picturesque cottages around, whose inhabitants seem to earn their living by acting as guides to the neighbourhood, and especially to the caverns which here more particularly abound. We inspected only one of these, and were contented to imagine the rest. Caverns are much like one another, and even did they vary, little of them can be seen by the aid of the dim torch or tallow-candle light; and groping about dark holes with a guttering candle spilling grease over yourself, slipping about upon sticky mud, getting wet with dripping water, bumping against unexpected rocks—these delights, together with the

general feeling of having to be in a state of continual watchfulness in case of a mishap, can hardly be considered to constitute a pleasure except perhaps to an enthusiast in caverns, a geologist, or a naturalist, none of which we profess to be; and, besides, did we not travel to enjoy ourselves? and cavern exploring was decidedly not our idea of such enjoyment.

The scenery of the Cheddar cliffs is both striking and effective. The spot has a certain hold upon the imagination. It consists of a narrow winding gorge cut through the hills by some strange freak of nature, a wild-looking chasm, with bare, bleak, and barren rocks; everywhere the crags are precipitous, in places overhanging. It is a mountain pass in miniature. Some writers have written enthusiastically about the grandeur of these cliffs; they are, however, more stern than grand; impressive truly, but scarcely awe-inspiring.

Yet opinions as to their grandeur differ, for in a work written by the Rev. John Eagles, and published in the year 1856, giving an interesting account of artists' sketching grounds, to my astonishment I came upon this statement, 'Cheddar is certainly much grander than the Pass of Llanberis.'

It was strange to think that those solid walls of rock we were walking through were once alive; for the stone is literally one mass of petrified sea-fish, crustacea, shells, marine plants, and various extinct animals. Fact is truly stranger than fiction.

From Cheddar to Weston-super-Mare we had a delightful road: we passed by many tiny hamlets, with glorious old churches; in startling contrast are these ancient fanes with the little lowly cottages they look

down upon, like a guardian mother fondly watching over her children. These old out-of-the-way Somerset churches are invariably full of interest; venerable, stately, weather-beaten, they well repay inspection; they are an art education in themselves; their towers are generally good, and they nearly always possess either some fine windows, antique brasses, or quaint gargoyles (grotesque-featured demons materialised)—strange ornamentations surely for Christian places of worship, yet, stranger still, they seem quite in harmony with these sacred edifices. Perchance also they boast of some richly carved oak that has escaped the spoilers' hands at the time of the Reformation, and, more marvellously still, escaped the whitewashing and paint of latter-day art-ignorant churchwardens. These ancient fanes, monuments of a mighty faith and a common creed, are no masses of meaningless stone, like so many similar structures raised in the present day; they are a part and parcel of the landscape; aged and beautiful, made sacred by the long past memories of the joys, sorrows, and cares of bygone generations of worshippers. Possibly one reason why these rural Somerset churches are so fine is that the close proximity of two such magnificent piles as Glastonbury and Wells stimulated their builders to do their best.

Weston-super-Mare was reached in the evening; a prosperous dull watering-place; we thought the hotel was the best thing about it. Weston (let us say for brevity) is peculiar in one respect—it is neither country nor seaside. Weston-super-Mud has it not been aptly called? for truly the Bristol Channel rolls in here in thick brown brackish waters, on to a muddy

shore, uninviting for the bather and not pleasant to look upon. Why is Weston so popular? But why ask the query? The world is full of contradictions and puzzles, and if one begins to start wondering at the things in it one would do but little else than wonder. For my own part I would give the pride of place to dull Bognor, or even sleepy Seaford, for at these one has at any rate the genuine sea.

We heard a startling rumour here, nothing more nor less than that the sea-serpent himself had actually at last been captured, and was visible on the shore; so next morning early we went thither to inspect the monster; not that we were so innocent that we really expected to see the fabled creature, but we thought it just possible that some strange animal might have been secured. Arriving at the beach we observed a long tent-like structure of sails, and duly paid the entrance fee demanded. And what was it, think you, kind reader, we saw? Merely a long spar, which had, we supposed, been washed ashore or picked up at sea; this was covered with slimy weeds and living barnacles; a sickly sight, though one possibly interesting to a naturalist. It certainly was not a sea-serpent; however, we had paid our money, and to dispute with the mariners whose possession it was, and who were turning many an honest (?) penny by the show, would only have caused ourselves to be laughed at; so we wended our way back to our hotel to overhear the waiter telling our groom all about the wonderful monster, which he graphically described in the most thrilling penny-a-line style, although he confessed his account was only given second-hand. 'Please, sir,' said our man to us, 'I should so like to see the sea-serpent, as I have never

seen one yet;' and the desired permission was granted him.

From Weston we went to Clevedon, another Weston in miniature, possessing the same advantages (query disadvantages) as to situation, only the town itself is more picturesque. We had a delightful drive through a charming country, rich with luxuriant meadows, and dotted with peaceful homes and contented-looking cottages with flower-abounding gardens—a country quite idyllic, a poem of scenery. A well-wooded bird-haunted land it was, with leafy tree-girt lanes, suggestive of pleasant wanderings, reposeful, mellow, homelike, the perfection of sylvan beauty; a landscape of a kind that old England alone can show, a charming drive all the way.

From Weston to Clifton the country, though beautiful, was bleaker than that we had been accustomed to of late, and though it abounded in fine prospects there was nothing of special interest to detain us till we arrived at the latter place. The Clifton Down Hotel is one of the few modern inns of which I can speak without reserve in praise of its comfort and general arrangements. If other hotels of the present day were more like this most excellent establishment, I for one would never complain of them, in spite of their architectural shortcomings.

We spent a day very agreeably exploring the beauties of the place. Bristol is indeed supremely fortunate in the possession of so charming a suburb; I know of no other busy manufacturing town with so romantic an outskirt. It is a thing for which its inhabitants should be truly grateful that they can actually walk, independent of train or tram, out away

from the bustling, noisy, confined streets, right on to the breezy bracing downs, with their glorious expansive prospects, both of sky and land, and pure life-giving atmosphere.

Leaving Clifton we passed through Bristol, which, alas! is fast losing its antique look; and a disagreeable bit of driving it was, threading our way amongst the busy traffic and over-thronged tramway lines; but at last the green fields were reached, and we had a very pretty country all the way to Bath.

It was a hot sunny day, for the sun can shine in England, and pretty warmly too, at times, let jealous foreigners say what they will; and Bath with its dazzling white stone houses and dusty roads struck us as a little glaring, accustomed as we were to the soft rich verdure and leafy shade of rural lanes. For this reason we only remained long enough in Beau Nash's famous city (whose fallen fortunes as a watering-place, by the way, seem to be reviving) to bait our steeds and refresh the inner man, after which we once more proceeded upon our pleasant way.

Soon after leaving Bath we had to climb the long ascent of Box Hill, during which, on looking back, we had from time to time glorious panoramic prospects. The country now became exceedingly beautiful; fair wooded pastures were on either side of us, the meadows were tinted and carpeted with wild flowers; surely the cows that live on flowers should give sweet milk! A pretty country it was: the sweet breath of the air, laden with the rare incense of the mingled odours of wild flowers and plants, the bright sunshine, the songs of birds, the music of the summer wind playing with the trees, ever rising and falling in

long-drawn-out cadences, made our stage that evening a very enjoyable one. But how we pitied the poor railway traveller, to whom all this beauty is as though it were not, for just when the scenery is most charming he is buried in a darksome sulphureous tunnel. Poor creature!

In the evening we arrived at Chippenham, a pleasing old town set in the midst of a thinly populated agricultural country. We had no guide book with us, so could not look up its past history; nor did we wish for one, we were well contented with the brief notice given in our Paterson: this left a good deal to our imagination, which was well, for we could romance and idealise a little.

An old place like Chippenham, with its ancient houses, shops, inns, and weather-beaten church, appears to me an epitome of the history of the English people of past times—a record of its every-day peaceful inhabitants, beings too insignificant for the historian, who troubles himself only about the great and notable people of the land. Looking out from our hotel window, down upon the time-toned houses, quaint, irregular, uneven-roofed, some projecting, some falling back, upon the old signs and old names, one almost seems to have awakened from a Rip van Winkle dream, backwards instead of forwards, and to expect each moment to hear the warning horn and rattle of the arriving coach. This may appear a fanciful conceit on my part, but being so much upon the road, listening to the often repeated stories, so lovingly dwelt upon, of the days that are no more, one somehow enters strangely into the spirit of the past—it holds one in willing bondage—for had we not travelled along

the old coach roads, stayed at the same old coaching inns, our long departed forefathers had—had we not lived, as it were, for a brief time with them again?

At Chippenham my wife was taken suddenly ill. I only relate this fact to show a specimen of the universal kindness that we everywhere, and from all those we came across, received—a something not to be bought and paid for. It was late at night, and the worthy doctor, who had just retired to rest, at once got up and returned with me to the hotel, and saw my wife, who was really very ill. It so happened the doctor required something for her he had not at his surgery, and that could only be procured in Bath. Said he to me, 'You will just be able to catch the next train; you had better start at once and get what we want.' Whilst he was speaking he wrote the order out. I did not care to leave my wife, suffering as she was, thus amongst strangers, though both the landlord and landlady of the hotel were kindness itself; possibly my looks betrayed my unexpressed feelings; however that may be, I cannot say; but glancing at me the kindly hearted doctor suddenly exclaimed, 'I have a pass on the railway, I'll go; you stay with your wife,' and he went without another word; nor would he receive any extra payment for his time and trouble—all he would accept was my most grateful thanks, which he could not refuse. Such actions, done for utter strangers, tell more plainly than any words that kindly hearts still exist in this cold-hearted money-making age.

CHAPTER XIX.

Multum in Parvo—Prehistoric England—Marlborough—An ideal Hostel—An old Curiosity Shop—A Bargain indeed—A Chat with a Commercial Traveller—A peculiar Sign—A bleak Stage—A Steam-driven Age—The Farm of the Future—Where St. George killed the Dragon—Faringdon—The History of an old English Town—Ancient Monuments—A bold Challenge—A headless Ghost—Primitive Pit Dwellings—A strange Relic—A very antique Horn—Abingdon—Mists and Fogs—Wokingham—Virginia Water—Home.

THIS England, as I have before remarked, is but a small country; but so great is its wealth of ever-varying beauty, it seems to me in a scenic sense almost, nay, I may say quite, inexhaustible; the more I wander over it, the more I am amazed at its endless resources. Some one somewhere says—who or where I cannot now remember, therefore I quote from memory—that 'England is dotted all over with historical mansions. There is not a league of its surface that is not instinct with memories; not a crag nor a wooded hill round which does not cling some tale of the past.' And for this reason, small though this tiny island of ours may be, it is more than large enough for me; and because of the want of all these things America, vast as it is, is all too small. Not but that there is a great charm in the grand scenery of that magnificent continent, but in time the mind wearies of simple grandeur and primæval glories. Speaking for myself, after a short sojourn in a new country an

intense longing takes possession of me for the sight of an old grey historic ruin, an ancient 'ivy-mantled' church, with its weather-worn tower, an antique moated manor house, an old-time roadside coaching hostelrie, or even a humble wayside cottage, something that speaks of bygone days, and calls up associations of bygone people. It is these associations that hallow places, and give to them that glamour of old romance that is so delightful. What would Haddon Hall be were it not for the tradition of Dorothy Vernon? Romantic as it is, a picture rather than a building, still it would lose more than half its charm without that cherished memory. You may plant forests, build cities, found empires even, but you cannot command these old historic memories and traditions. It is such associations that make so many spots in this old England of ours hallowed, haunted ground.

Somewhat in this manner ran our thoughts as we drove along from Chippenham to Marlborough, through a land abounding in historic memories of a forgotten age. Well wooded and well watered at first, by degrees our road grew bleaker as we came upon the swelling downs of Wiltshire. This whole district, wide, open, wild, and bare, swept by the storms of winter, treeless, unsheltered from the scorching summer sun—a district which conveys to the traveller the impression of uninhabitedness (an uninhabited England!)—was once, it would appear, thickly peopled, and now abounds with the grass-grown and moulder-ing relics of a mystic past, of the days whose history is lost in the dim obscurity of centuries.

On our way we passed the striking mound of Silbury, impressive in its solemn loneliness, a fit rest-

ing place for the prehistoric dead of whom even Tradition herself is as silent as the buried men beneath this mighty earth-pile. Mighty I have said, for this gigantic tumulus is the largest in Europe: Silbury Hill, it is marked on our map; an artificial mound great enough to be called by the Ordnance Survey a *hill!* It has long outlived its need and history. From hence you look down upon another inscrutable relic of the past, the remains of the temple (?) of Avebury, which in its prime was to Stonehenge what St. Paul's is to a humble village church! Alas! the Goths of old made a quarry of its grey weather-beaten stones, threw them ruthlessly down, and broke them up to build their wretched houses with, and mend their trumpery roads—miserable beings! They had stood unhurt the storms of unremembered years, but the vandal hands of destructive man, to save a little trouble and paltry expense, wrecked this grand monument, even employing fire and gunpowder to expedite his barbarous work! Was ever greater vandalism perpetrated? No less an authority than Dr. Stukeley has boldly maintained that this structure was 'coeval with Abraham'! though whether of such remote antiquity is extremely doubtful; but we may fairly conclude it was ancient, prehistoric, even when the Romans first invaded Britain.

Marlborough is a pleasant little town, famous in the old coaching days as a convenient halting place on the journey from town to fashionable Bath and frequented Clifton, possessing as it did one of the most comfortable inns in England, an old manor house converted into an hotel, with ample oak-panelled rooms and ancient gardens presided over by a worthy portly

obliging landlord — an ideal hostel surely! Marlborough now is solely famous for its celebrated school, which stands on the site of an old British fortress, which in turn became a Roman stronghold, a feudal castle, a manor house, an inn, and lastly a college—truly a varied programme! The school has apparently restored to Marlborough some of the prosperity that the railways threatened to take away. Marlborough seems almost perfectly adapted for such a school, surrounded by the far-spreading, health-bestowing downs, forming the grandest of playgrounds.

In the olden times over forty coaches used to rattle through the town; it was full of life and bustle then. It used to be a standard proverb on the road that the High Street of the place was the widest in all England; how this may be I cannot say, but it is a street of ample width; this circumstance, together with the fact that the houses on either side are comparatively low, makes it a bright and sunny one, and we found it a very pleasant way to wander along in quest of *bric-à-brac* to take home with us. An old broker's or second-hand shop attracted our attention, and as it looked 'likely' we entered the confusion-crowded store, and enjoyed a half-hour in inspecting its miscellaneous treasures, scattered about in delightful disorder. At last, just as we were on the point of leaving trophyless, we unearthed from a mass of lumber a remarkably fine old English bracket clock, in excellent condition, but dusty and dirty exceedingly. 'How much?' we asked. The owner carefully looked us down, as though cogitating in his own mind the utmost amount he could place upon the article. We were pretty well used to this sort of proceeding, and as a rule have found that about one-half

of what is at first demanded as 'dirt cheap' is gleefully accepted in the end. The art of bargain selling requires a special training. 'Well,' replied the proprietor thoughtfully, 'it's not dear at 4*l.* 10*s.*, is it?' We had not the audacity to say it was, nor did we attempt to beat him down; for would we not gladly have given double the amount to secure such a treasure? So the purchase was concluded, to our mutual satisfaction, though I verily believe the worthy broker mentally reproached himself as a fool for not demanding more, seeing we had paid him all he asked without a grumble—a rather rare incident in such transactions, I fancy. The clock is one of the finest of its kind I have ever come across in or out of a museum; it now graces my drawing-room, and has been much admired and envied by not a few connoisseurs.

Here I may remark that our man, bitten by our collecting mania, used to go bargain hunting on his own account, though of course in a humble way, and an astonishing amount of rubbish he managed to accumulate—rubbish of which he was immensely proud. Upon one occasion, however, he secured a rare prize: at the little cottage he was lodging in at Lynmouth, whilst we were there, he bought from his landlady a most curious antique mirror, quaintly shaped, and set in a wonderfully carved frame; this was inclosed in a gilt and painted case—the work of no mean artist, and from an inscription upon it, unless a forgery, which I think unlikely, it bore evidence of having been brought over in the Spanish Armada. Not contented with my own opinion, I got an artist to inspect it, and he agreed in my judgment. There is no great improbability in the supposition, as it might have been captured from one of

the Spanish ships by some old Devon sea-warrior, and been handed down from father to son till by some strange chance it came into the hands of our groom. Its history would be interesting to trace. For this bit of art work, worthy of a place in any collection, our man gave the magnificent sum of five shillings, and directly afterwards refused five pounds for it, to my certain knowledge, for I offered him that amount myself. Who shall say after this that bargains are not still to be picked up in England—at least by those who go upon driving tours? *Verbum sap.*

At our inn at Marlborough whilst watching the horses being groomed—a favourite amusement of mine—I ran across a commercial traveller, a regular character in his way, and had a long and a very interesting conversation with him. I have a special liking for characters; in these days of slavish uniformity a little originality is a welcome relief. We are not all cast in the same mould, like so many peas in a pod or like the unmeaning products of machinery. It appears that, in the same manner as ourselves, my commercial was a pilgrim by road, as he took his sample goods about with him in a roomy waggonette, having his wife as a companion. Thus he told me he had travelled year after year nearly all over England, and 'enjoyed himself amazingly,' and he added that 'he would not change places with any man living—that he would not.' Happy being! he could not wish for more were he a monarch or a millionaire.

As we left this old place we noticed a curious sign over a public-house—The Five Alls—with paintings of the queen (or a queen), a bishop, a lawyer, a soldier, and lastly a rudely drawn portly representation of John

Bull, and beneath these figures respectively were the following inscriptions: I rule for all, I pray for all, I plead for all, I fight for all, and, beneath John Bull, I pay for all. Poor John Bull!

The long stage over the exposed downs from Marlborough was in the coaching times considered one of the bleakest drives in the south of England; verily the journey must have been a cheerless one upon a winter's day with a chilly 'nor'easter' sweeping unchecked over the desolate uplands. How pure, as we proceeded along, the air seemed, unpolluted by smoke! how quiet and still the country—the only sound we heard was the far-off tinkling of distant sheep bells! But I am drawing conclusions too hastily: was it imagination or did we really hear the throbbing of a steam engine? Alas! it was no mere fancy, for, hidden away for the time in a hollow, we presently came upon the monster itself—a steam plough busily at work.

Machinery has found its way into the very heart of rural England, and the picturesque suffers in consequence. A utilitarian spirit is abroad everywhere. The steam plough, quite a common sight in a day's drive now, unlike the pictorial team of our forefathers, could hardly be selected as a subject for a poet's praise; the mowing machine, though less of an eyesore, is certainly not a thing of beauty, and it has to a great extent but too successfully taken the place of the time-honoured mower and reaper, so dear to all artists; but the worst transgressor of all is the steam cultivator, that perfection of ugliness. Even the very hayfield, sweet-scented, the delight of children, and so dear to all lovers of the country, is threatened by the scientific silo.

What will the painter of the future do with all these things—what can he do? He cannot well put beauty into ugliness, yet in painting rural subjects in the days to come he cannot, to be veracious, altogether ignore them. And not alone the eye, but the ear also is offended; the laboured puffing and hiss of steam-driven engines are sounds utterly out of harmony with rural surroundings; nor is the monotonous rattle of the mowing or reaping machines much better, though they have the advantage of the absence of smoke and steam. All these sounds are wholly opposed to the spirit of rural scenes; they but too effectually destroy the peace and restful calm of such by their busy, fussy, factory-like puffing and clattering. On the other hand the good old-fashioned rural sounds, such as the whetting of the scythe, were eminently soothing ones, and served but to emphasise the general quietude. You could listen to them for long with delight, so unaffected and musical were they.

The mathematical accuracy also with which the crops are now laid, and the precision of the work, is another eyesore; there is no picturesque irregularity anywhere. Farming is becoming more and more a scientific business, though not much more profitable on that account I fear. With the old-fashioned ploughing team of the days of yore, the reaper (who has existed for over three thousand years), the mower, the gleaner, and the haymaker improved out of existence, where will be the poetry of country life? One cannot grow sentimental over matter-of-fact machinery. The farmhouse, the very embodiment of peace, plenty, and rural felicity—and, by the way, how delightful to a town eye things look about a farmhouse!—will by degrees become

more and more of a factory—a corn-growing, cattle-rearing, milk-and-butter producing establishment. Then the charm of the farm will be, alas! no more. It is even within the bounds of possibility that time may so alter the economy of rural life that another generation may perchance require a commentator to properly understand the poets of the past when reading their descriptions of country scenes. They will possibly understand as little of such bygone things as we do of the details of the armour of the knights of old.

A mechanical age may be a convenient one, but machinery does not tend towards beauty. A locomotive is not a picturesque object; the old mail coach was pre-eminently so; the shrieking of a steam whistle is but a poor exchange for the cheery notes of the old-fashioned horn of the red-coated guard; an ironclad in like manner cannot compare in beauty with the stately three-decker of old; and the steam plough and other similar agricultural machines, as I have before remarked, are of the ugly, ugly. The gigantic hotels that have come in with the railways are but poor substitutes for the snug hostelries of past times; the huge steam mill is not a lovely thing, and it is, alas! fast taking the place of the dear old windmills and droning water wheels, which form such delightful features in the landscape, both life-giving and picturesque. What artist could possibly make a pleasing sketch of a prosaic modern steam-mill? The latter is by nature ugly, commonplace, the others as inherently romantic. Facts are facts, though not always pleasant things, and the fact cannot be gainsaid that, with all our boasted progress, we are losing much that made life worth living, to those at least who have an eye for the beautiful.

We lead a less picturesque life than did our ancestors: with the help of machinery we save time, make money more quickly; but are we really happier than they? Has not modern progress, with all its advantages, somehow managed to destroy much of the goodfellowship of old, and many of the simple pleasures of a country existence? There never was such a thing as the ideal country life of the poets or the romantic creations of artists, but unfortunately we appear to be getting farther and farther away from, instead of drawing nearer and nearer to, their happy ideal.

From Swindon to Faringdon we passed through a cultivated land, appearing in comparison to the bare downs to be thickly peopled, but only appearing so from contrast; for this portion of England is by no means overpopulous. On our stage we passed through the pretty village of Shrivenham, with fine old trees in the roadway.

In the days before the Reformation this place contained the mother church of the district, and thither the country folk flocked to be shrived—hence its name—so at least we were informed; but though plausible we deem the derivation doubtful. From the road here is obtained a capital view of the far-famed White Horse. At the top of the hill, we also learnt, is a bare spot of ground where, according to local tradition, St. George fought and killed the dragon, the bare spot being where the dreaded monster's blood was spilled. 'Travellers meet with strange bedfellows' is an old proverb; rather would I say, 'Travellers come across strange facts.'

Faringdon is a quiet old-fashioned place, an excellent example of an English country town of the pre-railway age. It is interesting for its naturalness



A VILLAGE INN, CLANFIELD, NEAR FARINGDON.

rather than its beauty, for beautiful it is not; it has much the look now it must have borne in the old coaching days. It is delightfully non-enterprising: both in population and the ground it stands upon it is much the same now as it has been for generations back: it has no ragged suburbs and few new houses, but it has a pleasant market square, at the top of which, picturesquely situated, is a fine old church, tree-surrounded and rook-beloved.

Entering Faringdon one feels one might be a traveller of a hundred years ago, such an old-world place it seems; perhaps a little slumberous, but in this age of wear and tear quiet is a thing not to be despised. The two old coaching inns are there still, unaltered, unimproved; the mail of the past might still drive up to their doors as in bygone days, and there would be but little to show to the Jehu that times had altered.

These ancient towns with their antique flavour and past associations give one some idea of what England of old was like before such places had been improved, and enlarged, and transformed by prosperity into an accumulation of houses, bustling and unbeautiful. One of the chief charms of such places is the traditions that have risen round them; the history they have made or that has been made for them; they are not simply a gathering of buildings, they possess an interest beyond that of mere bricks—or stones—and mortar. It has often struck me what an interesting monograph might be written about almost any one of these old places.

At Faringdon we looked up an antiquarian friend, a lover of old books, one learned in all the local legends, and we took advantage of his stored-up know-

ledge to learn something of the past history of the spot. As a fair sample of the treasured traditions and varied fortunes and histories of our old English towns, let us take a glance back at that of Faringdon, and be it remembered that almost any other place of the same age would supply matter of equal if not perchance greater interest.

In the first place, the church is a chapter of history in itself; in it are some ancient and curious monuments, the most ancient of which—a brass—bears date 1396. The quaintest is perhaps one that begins in this startling manner:

STAY, TRAVELLER.

Behold the Spoils of the Small Pox!
Alas, never more Splendid!

and then goes on to describe the perfect wife that the disease had carried away. In another place is a marble monument, having inserted on the top of it a cannon ball, and by the inscription below we learn that 'near this spot lies the body of Mr. John Beckley, formerly a surgeon in his Majesty's Navy, who in an engagement with a French Squadron, off the coast of Portugal, on the 17th day of August, 1759, had his leg shot off by the above ball.' But amongst many other notable monuments the most notable of all is one to Sir Henry Unton. Let an ancient MS. book, kindly lent me by my antiquarian friend, give in its own quaint wording an account of this Elizabethan worthy: 'This Sir Henry Unton was esteemed the most gallant man of his age. He was employed by Queen Elizabeth ambassador into France, where he behaved himself right stoutly in her behalf, as may appear by this

particular: in the month of March 1592, being sensible of some injury offered by the Duke of Guise (who for his prowess was stiled *the bold*) to the honour of the Queen of England, he sent him this challenge:

'"Forasmuch as lately in the lodging of the Lord Du Magne, and in public elsewhere, impudently, indiscreetly, and overboldly you spoke of my soveraign, whose sacred person here in this country I represent, to maintain both by word and weapon her honour (which never was called in question among people of honesty and virtue); I say you have wickedly lied in speaking so basely of my soveraign, and you shall do nothing else but lie whensoever you shall dare to tax her honour; moreover, that her sacred person (being one of the most complete and virtuous princesses that lives in the world) ought not to be evil spoken of by the tongue of such a perfidious traytor to her law and country as you are: and hereupon I do defy you, and challange your person to mine, with such manner of arms as you shall like or chuse, be it either on horseback or on foot. . . . So assigning an indifferent place, I will there maintain my words, and the lie which I gave you, and which you shall not endure if you have any courage at all in you. If you consent not to me hereupon, I will hold you, and cause you to be generally held, for the arrantest coward and most slanderous slave that lives in all France. I expect your answer."'

It does not appear, however, that the *bold* Duke accepted this daring challenge.

Near to the church is Faringdon House, a comparatively new mansion; the older and more picturesque one, of the same name (long since pulled down), was fortified during the civil wars and held for the

king. By a curious combination of circumstances it was actually besieged by its owner, who had the pleasure of bombarding his own house. During this bombardment the spire and one of the aisles of the church were destroyed—so now Faringdon Church is spireless. The reason of Sir Robert Pye fighting on Cromwell's side may be accounted for by the fact that he was the son-in-law of the renowned Hampden; but as to how the king's party came into possession of the house history is silent. Faringdon House has the honour of being one of the last places in the kingdom that held out for the unfortunate Charles I., several times repulsing with heavy loss the Parliamentary forces that attempted to storm it, and only surrendering after Oxford had fallen.

One of the sons of this Sir Robert, Hampden Pye to wit, so called after his famous grandfather, died in a foreign land, estranged from his parents, because he had married clandestinely some one they did not approve of; and now his ghost is said to haunt a certain avenue in the park, walking uncomfortably up and down, with his head under his arm—a strange sort of ghost, but then genuine old-fashioned ghosts were always peculiar in their ways. There still exist those, we were told, who upon dark stormy nights dread to pass by this avenue, and who most solemnly declare that they have seen this strange headless spirit. Surely this ghost must be the original of the Hamilton Tighe of the Ingoldsby Legends! Another of the later descendants of the same Sir Robert was Henry James Pye, the poet laureate of the day, not a very brilliant one: it was he, my antiquarian friend informed us, who so ruthlessly pulled down the old historic pile of Faringdon House to make room for a more modern structure—

a poet of all others to do this!—stating as an excuse for his vandalism, 'that he did not see why he should live in an old house, to please other people who had not to occupy it.' But I have only space to mention one or two other interesting things in or around Faringdon. What a wealth of history and tradition our old English towns possess, vividly reminding us of vanished days! When one begins to write upon such a rich subject it is hard to know where to leave off, so much has perforce, in a book of wanderings like this, to be left unnoticed. Near to the town is a strange place called Cole's Pits, the remains of ancient British pit dwellings, locally reputed to have been the capital of King Coel, or Coyll. Was he the genuine old King Cole, I wonder? Oh, these country-side traditions! —one must be made of faith to credit all one learns on a driving tour. Needless to say these most primitive dwellings, like the so-called Druids' circles, cromlechs, barrows, and similar prehistoric remains, afford us now no indication as to when they were formed, but they supply us with ample evidence as to the rude and uncultivated condition of the then inhabitants. In another place is a fine old granary or store barn, a massive structure supported by strong buttresses; this belonged of old to the Cistercian monks, and is supposed to have been built, as others of similar kind were, for the purpose of gathering their tithes in kind and of receiving such rents from the tenants as were paid in corn. Strangely enough, contrary to the almost invariable rule in such barns, the height of the doorways is barely sufficient to admit an ordinary load of corn; but this is again explained by the fact that in those remote times, in this particular district, low carts were generally employed in

husbandry. I had almost forgotten to mention that in one of the pillars that support the market-house there is an iron staple to which offenders were fastened during their public flagellation when whipping for misdemeanours was in fashion.

From Faringdon to Abingdon the country is a purely agricultural one, with extensive prospects to the left, and to the right fine panoramic views of the Berkshire hills and downs. On either hand are—

> Long fields of barley and of rye,
> That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
> And through the fields the road runs by.

The first village on the way is Buckland, where in the church chancel is a strange relic in a wooden box, a human heart, carefully preserved in a case: the tradition connected with this we were unfortunately unable to learn. Possibly it was the heart of an Englishman who had died abroad, which had been preserved in a case and sent home, his body being interred where he ended his life. This was frequently done in past times, when the transport of the remains of a deceased body was an extremely difficult and costly matter, and one not always to be accomplished even for money, for sailors had (and have even now) a superstitious dread of taking a corpse on board, and have been known to throw such into the sea, in spite of all remonstrances, upon a storm coming on. It may be remembered that the heart of Lord Edward Bruce was preserved in like manner, and sent from Holland to Scotland, after the unfortunate nobleman had been slain in the memorable duel with Sir Edward Sackville, afterwards Earl of Dorset, which took place at Bergen-op-Zoom in 1613.

To the right of our road we passed Pusey, an estate that has for ages been held by the family of that name. It is said to have been granted to them by Canute and to have been held by a horn, such grants not being uncommon in those primitive times. The horn is stated to be still in the possession of the family, a cherished relic.

Abingdon—so named from the great abbey that arose there in the seventh century—is a picturesque town, with signs of life, but is too well known to need description here; suffice it then to say that its quaint narrow streets, leading down to the river, and its age-mellowed buildings, repeating themselves in the quiet, flowing water, form a charming picture. Abingdon is Abingdon, it is not like any other place: long may it retain its delightful individuality. How characteristic are these old towns! they have a flavour of the soil they spring from, but we know better in the year of progress 1885 than to be stupidly original, as the following extract from the 'Standard' proves: 'The Portsmouth Town Council, having decided to spend 120,000*l.* in the erection of a new guildhall, resolved yesterday *to copy the design of the Bolton Town Hall*'—the italics are my own. Why this wretched repetition—why should Portsmouth desire a town hall a fac-simile simply of another one, designed possibly for wholly different surroundings? Oh, this wearing want of originality, this distressing soul-deadening uniformity. With all our cleverness are we wiser than our ancestors? Shall we never take a lesson from Nature, who never yet made two things even of the same kind quite alike?

Out from Abingdon our stage was indeed a pleasant one, abounding with Birket-Foster-like 'bits,'

peeps of hedge-rowed lanes, yellow cornfields, and cosy cottages; a land full of homeliness, of old gabled buildings, ancient elms, rustic stiles, footpaths, green meadows, and all sorts of pleasantness blended together into one poetic harmony; with pictures of red-brick farmsteads, rick-surrounded, and ever and again of antique faces. We made our midday halt at Wallingford, and in the evening came to pleasant picturesque Pangbourne, where we stayed at the little rural inn, so well known and beloved of Thames boating-men, fishermen, and artists.

A soft white silvery mist was over all the landscape the next morning—probably it was a yellow fog in town; at least so we chose to imagine it, and rejoiced in the contrast. In the country the light vapour lent a tender beauty to the scene; not dense enough to completely hide all our surroundings, the luminous white masses enhanced, by the mystery they gave to everything, rather than detracted from the scenery. The landscape had a shadowy, unsubstantial look, as unreal and as indescribable as the imaginings of a dream. Now and again the mists would lighten or clear away for a space, or lift aside curtain-like, disclosing scenes altogether different from what we had expected. These surprises were very pleasing. It is astonishing how all things are magnified by mists; a low hill will appear to be quite a mountain, a little cliff a mighty precipice. At one portion of our road a wooded hill was so softened as to appear dim and unreal, a ghost-like sort of hill looming up gigantically. I have seen the very moderate crags on either side of a Derbyshire dale look quite Alpine on a foggy day, and when the fog suddenly rose I could

hardly realise that such low-lying hills could by any possibility assume such grand forms.

Passing through Reading we proceeded to Wokingham, where we rested for a time, and in the cool of the evening had a delightful drive on to Virginia Water. The next day saw us once more in dear old smoky London, glad yet sorry that our most enjoyable outing had come to an end—glad to get home to 'our ain fireside,' as all Englishmen are, sorry that our free, roving, gipsy sort of life was over for the year. Having once tasted the pleasures of such a Bohemian existence, I always feel as the glad summer time comes round an irresistible longing to get on the road once more; the many ever-pleasant memories of past wanderings make me eager to renew my rural ramblings. What charming pictures rise up now before me as I write! what pleasurable recollections of exhilarating drives over bracing moorlands, across lonely mountain roads, through lovely pastoral scenes, gay with daisy-dotted meadows and bright with silvery streams! what pictures of enchanting landscapes bathed in soft golden sunshine, the air laden with the sweet perfume of newly mown hay, with here a lowly rustic cottage and there an old grey farmstead! Now a little trout-haunted river rises before me, with a drowsy antique mill, weather-tinted and uneven-roofed. What unnumbered happy days also of bright blue skies, with the lightest of summer cloudlets dreamily floating above—ay, and of gloomy days as well, with storm-driven vapours overhead and pelting rain below! But the sunny memories are to the fore, and if bad weather did come at times it gave us as a compensation glorious colour effects and a

display of light and shade that wonderfully enhanced the beauty of the landscape.

What delightful recollections also come before me of cosy evenings spent in various rural hostelries, of entertaining chats with 'mine good host' or worthy hostess! But enough; let me remember I am writing this in town one gloomy November day, and the recollection of past delights makes the dreary outlook more dreary still. And now, kind reader, we have travelled long and far together; the time has come for me to bid you farewell. I can only trust that you have entered somewhat into the pleasure and spirit of our most delightful excursion. Some day, even, I fain would hope, if you have not already done so, you too may enjoy the infinite pleasure of a holiday ramble along the lovely roads and pleasant lanes of our beautiful and well-beloved motherland; for wander whither we will—

'There is no land like England,
Where'er that land may be;
O'er all the world 'tis Kingland,
Crown'd by its bride, the sea.
And they shall rest in the balmiest bed
Who battle for it, and bleed for it;
And they shall be head of the mighty dead
Who die in the hour of need for it!'

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Spottiswoode & Co. Printers, New-street Square, London.

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